



Volume 63, Issue 2

News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas

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CLOSER TO FULL REFORM

Governor partially signs bill expanding protections



The new bill (SB5) protects critically important species like Arizona toads, leaf-cutter bees, prairie dogs and digger bees among many others important for New Mexico's environmental health. Page 9.
Photos by Mary Katherine Ray.



Photo courtesy of NM Department of Energy

Solar & battery-storage facility clears hurdle
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Photo by David McGahey


Student activists at the Roundhouse
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Photo by Camilla Feibelman

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EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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Two of three climate bills sponsored by Senator Mimi Stewart head to the Governor's desk for signing along with other environmental legislation. **Page 3**

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Page 1 banner: The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is a summer resident in most of the US, including New Mexico, after spending the winter as far south as Central America. They eat not only gnats, but also many other kinds of little insects, caterpillars and spiders. Florence Miriam Bailey describes them perfectly in her 1928 *Birds of New Mexico*, “The intense, vivacious little Gnatcatcher is always talking about something important, and always whipping around as he talks.” Photo by Mary Katherine Ray.

Donate your vehicle today!

Support our efforts to protect and preserve water, wildlife, lands and climate in New Mexico and West Texas by contributing to our vehicle donation program. It’s easy, pick up is free and your donation could be tax deductible.



SIERRA CLUB

RIO GRANDE CHAPTER

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Would you like to support the Rio Grande Chapter’s campaign to promote clean, renewable energy? How about student programs like the Global Warming Express? Your donations make things happen!

Legislative wins and struggles

BY CAMILLA FEIBELMAN
CHAPTER DIRECTOR

Every session begins with high hopes. And most sessions end with a sense of accomplishment.

At the heart of this legislative session is the question of whether we'll require industry to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to help curb and slow the gravest impacts of the climate crisis. Or if we'll pay for alternatives and absorb the costs of the crisis ourselves.

In this session we prioritized a suite of three climate solutions and just economic transition bills led by Senate Pro Tem Mimi Stewart and supported in the House by Reps Ortez and Szczepanski.

SB4 the Clear Horizons Act (Stewart/Ortez) would have enshrined the Governor's greenhouse gas reductions goals into law and required rulemaking at the Environment Department (NMED) to enforce them.

But the oil and gas industry spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to convince key legislators that the bill would have regulated people's wood burning stoves, which don't even register on the state greenhouse gas inventory, instead of regulating oil and gas which generates 53% of the state's emissions.

Industry falsely claimed that reducing greenhouse gases would cost regular New Mexicans instead of the Texas oil execs that export billions of dollars of profits from our natural resources, extracted off of our public lands for their own benefit instead of ours. And because of this investment SB 4 did not make it through.

On a happier note, though, we passed the other two bills in the package.

- SB48 - COMMUNITY BENEFITS ACT (Stewart/ Szczepanski) - Funds over \$209M in grid modernization, electric school buses, workforce training and more.
- SB83 - INNOVATION IN STATE GOVERNMENT (Stewart/Roybal-Caballero) - Provides \$13.5M to to agencies in support of creative climate solutions.



Climate activists at March 6 Climate Crisis Day rally. Photo by David McGahey.

A host of key bills also passed that we've been involved with or supported during the session.

Climate & Energy

- HB 128 - NMFA LOCAL SOLAR ACCESS FUND (Szczepanski/ Pope) - Creates a fund with \$20M to allow local governments to plan and build local solar projects.
- HB 93 - ADVANCED GRID TECHNOLOGY PLANS (Ortez/ Padilla) - Prioritizes ways of upgrading our transmission system with reduced costs, environmental impacts and efficient technologies like reconductoring, which runs new lines on existing infrastructure.
- SB 142 - GRID MODERNIZATION ROADMAP (Muñoz/Dixon) - Requires EMNRD and the PRC to work together to create a Grid Modernization Roadmap and expands the grid modernization grant program to schools.

Wildlife & Lands

- SB 5 - GAME COMMISSION REFORM (Campos/Wirth) - Changes the name of the Game and Fish Department to the Wildlife Department, providing it with more funding and affirming its management of all wildlife, modernizing the associated commission to be more representative of the state and interests in wildlife. This bill was

already partially vetoed by the governor eliminating the section of the bill that requires "cause" for removing a commissioner.

- HB 284 - FREE-ROAMING HORSES & LIVESTOCK CODE (McQueen/Woods) - Allows the NM Livestock Board to certify qualified experts to work with local jurisdictions to use already approved and best scientifically validated methods like contraception and relocation to help manage the state's free-roaming horses to prevent harm to themselves and to landscapes.
- HB 219 - SLOT CANYON RIVERLANDS STATE PARK (Small/Steinborn) - Establishes a new State Park on 783 acres of land owned by the Parks Division and would connect to the proposed Rio Grande Trail.

Water Conservation

- SB 21 - POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM ACT (Wirth/Ortez) - Creates a state program to permit those waters no longer protected under the Clean Water Act, takes over permitting from the EPA for those waters that still have federal protection, and creates a structure for clean up of neglected groundwater spills. This coupled with \$20M in the budget will allow for clean up of neglected contamination sites which could include abandoned uranium mines and dry cleaners fluid spills (JF

Hernandez/Steinborn).

- SB 37 - STRATEGIC WATER RESERVE FUND (Stefanics/ Dixon) - Revises the Strategic Water Reserve to improve its effectiveness by adding a new purpose to support aquifer recharge, allow prioritization of transactions that support supplementary benefits, and create a permanent non-reverting fund to better support transactions.
- SB 7 - STORM WATER SERVICE AS MUNICIPAL UTILITY (Sharer) - Allows municipalities to create utilities to better address stormwater management and could provide opportunities to fund and implement green infrastructure.

Environmental Quality

- HB 140 - "HAZARDOUS WASTE CONSTITUENT" DEFINITION (Chandler/ Steinborn) - Allows the state to regulate certain forever chemicals that are not deemed hazardous waste by the federal government.
- HB 212 - PER- & POLY-FLOUROALKYL PROTECTION ACT (Ferrary) - Prohibits the use of certain PFAS in some consumer products. There's more to do in the future to ensure all forever chemicals are covered in more products.
- HB 291 - RECYCLING & STATE'S CIRCULAR ECONOMY (Romero/Steinborn) - Encourages manufacturers to rethink their product design, brings the staff needed to support these efforts and allows the Recycling and Illegal Dumping (RAID) fund to be used for local recycling infrastructure.

Fairness

- HB 91 - PUBLIC UTILITY RATE STRUCTURES (Ortez/Roybal Caballero) - Allows utilities to do rate making to help low-income families paying a huge percentage

continued Legislative on page 7

Thank you, partners make lobby days great

BY DIANE REESE
CHAPTER CHAIR

Each time we gather en masse at the Roundhouse for our big Environmental Days, we partner with co-hosts. These are great organizations that set up information tables and teach us about their mission and activities.

We are the strongest when we are in coalition.

These powerful events are a great way to show the legislators that a strong force is working for the environment.

We want to keep our water clean,

public lands accessible, wildlife protected and New Mexicans healthy.

We believe in science, we know climate change is real and we want action.

The tablers help with donations, enthusiasm and energy.

We encourage our grassroots lobbyists to get to know these groups, to join their networks and take action.

Each time I am overwhelmed by the excitement of the day.

Thank you to all our partner organizations.



Partner organization banners line the Rotunda at the Roundhouse on the chapter's two Environmental Days. On February 20, Lands, Water, and Wildlife Day, students and legislators spoke to activists during the noon rally. Photo by Max Underwood.

Gratitude and perseverance

I want to use this column to focus on the gratitude we feel for the efforts of you – our members, staff and supporters. Activism is not easy. For many of us, it is stepping far outside our comfort zone. But we have this bold spirit in abundance in our ranks. The hours and the passion spent this legislative session working for good laws to ensure a clean New Mexico were absolutely overwhelming!

You can read the session details in this Sierran. While the tabling of the Clean Horizons Act was heartbreaking, we still had wins.



DIANE REESE
Chair's Column

Preparation was key. We strategized going into the session. We met regularly to update and energize. And we made strategic decisions as the session unfolded. We worked in coalition and we did not stop. We attended committee

We filled some of the gaps left as the federal government not only removes protections but makes it easier to pollute our Earth.

hearings; we met with our own legislators to share real-life stories of impact.

I also want to highlight the advances we have made in youth involvement. Since 2012, we’ve been lucky to have Global Warming Express, a nationally recognized after-school program. Developed by kids and led by Director Genie Stevens, Global W.E. has educated and supported hundreds of kids to be able to act on their passions. Their enthusiasm is contagious. As anyone knows who has been at the Roundhouse when Global W.E. takes over, these kids truly inspire hope for the future.

Our lead in efforts to reengage older youth in climate activism has been our chapter coordinator, Caroline Funk. Caroline has worked to connect the chapter with high-schools in Albuquerque. This led to our participation in a year-long program to teach students about the complex issues of climate change. And it brought more than 80 high school students to our Environment Days at the Roundhouse.

Also, the Inspiring Connections Program is being rebuilt under the leadership of our outstanding Outings chair, Debbie Bryant, and our new Connections leader,

Halea Meese. One big request: Can you help us get our youth outside? We need adult volunteers to go on the Inspiring Connections outings. We need YOU! See the Outings News on page 9 for more information.

Finally, I will also emphasize that our work goes on all year long. With unrelenting assaults from Washington, it can seem daunting. But we cannot let their efforts win. Nothing feels better in a stressful situation than taking real action with results. Stay with us. If you haven’t yet, join us. Thank you!

In case you missed it: news highlights

BY REED ECKHARDT
RIO GRANDE SIERRAN TEAM

PFAS banned in fracking, full disclosure denied

Call it a win-lose situation for climate advocates seeking to halt the use of “forever chemicals” in fracking operations in New Mexico. The Oil and Gas Commission has agreed to a rule that would ban PFAS in such operations. But the commission declined to require companies to fully disclose all the chemicals they use, saying that could harm the firms’ trade secrets. Melissa Troutman with WildEarth Guardians said without full disclosure, it would be impossible to know if the ban is being followed.

Drought, low snowpack create wildfires threat

With snowpack far below average and most of the state in severe drought, NM could be facing a potentially disastrous wildfire season, experts say. Making matters worse, efforts to monitor wildfire-prone areas may be hampered by recent federal cutbacks. Those include the planned closure of two wildfire dispatch centers.

Solar effort in Sandoval County gets approval

The Sandoval County Commission has OK’d a solar array and battery storage facility not far from one near El Dorado previously approved by the Santa Fe Planning Commission. The project from PCR Investments is projected to create 200 megawatts of solar power and 110 megawatts for battery storage on the nearly 2,000-acre site.

Mexican grey wolf population keeps growing

New Mexico’s gray wolf population continues to flourish, Game and Fish officials from Arizona and New Mexico have confirmed. The number of wolves grew by 11% in 2024, making it the ninth straight year of expansion. Some advocates worry the

Trump administration will interfere with the effort.

Groups unite to protect land at White Sands

A three-way partnership has led to the protection of Chupadera Mesa on state-owned land adjoining White Sands National Park. The State Land Office, the New Mexico Land Conservancy, and the US Department of Defense joined hands to ban development on the property, which includes artifacts of the Jornada Mogollon people as well as cultural sites that include remnants of Seco Pueblo. The site contains the white gypsum of White Sands as well as wildlife that calls the mesa home.

NM chipmunk listed as endangered

Protection has been granted for a declining species of chipmunks native to the southern part of the state of New Mexico. The Peñasco least chipmunk is now an endangered species, thanks to a declaration by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In conjunction with its decision, the agency designated 4,400 acres of the Lincoln National Forest as critical habitat for the chipmunk.

Postponed meeting worries Pecos supporters

A planned meeting about a federal effort to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed for the next 20 years from mining was postponed recently, causing some doubts about whether the plan remains in place. Launched by then-Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and President Biden, the proposal is still under review, the Bureau of Land Management says, and it continued to seek public comment until March 17.

Uranium mines now a priority in Cibola National Forest

Mining for uranium has now become a “mission critical” for the Cibola National Forest, according to a

recording of a meeting obtained by Source New Mexico. The forest covers about 2 million acres, with most in New Mexico but also in western Oklahoma and northern Texas. The area of uranium focus is near Mount Taylor in northwest NM, where “we have some pretty big projects ... these will be priority projects,” said Heidi McRoberts, who is the forest supervisor.

Chaco buffer threatened by Trump order

An executive order from President Donald Trump has put the 10-mile buffer zone around Chaco Canyon in doubt. The president has ordered that federal agencies look at all public land withdrawals for “potential revision.” The current 20-year ban on oil and gas drilling in the buffer is the focus of a lawsuit filed by the Navajo Nation earlier this year that is aimed at ending the zone, where the Trump administration may be looking to expand energy production.

Holloman Lake, wildlife see high PFAS levels

Record-breaking levels of PFAS, known as “forever chemicals,” have been found in animal carcasses and plants surrounding Holloman Lake, near White Sands National Park, NM health officials report. The leading cause of this contamination is nearby Holloman Air Force Base, the experts said. A follow-up advisory from the state Department of Health requested that any hunters who ate waterfowl from the lake between 2010 and 2024 contact their physician.

Green hydrogen project OK’d for Questa/Taos

An energy storage project near Taos in the village of Questa has gotten full funding — a federal grant for \$231 million to store renewable energy by harvesting hydrogen from wastewater that could generate night time energy with fuel cells. When completed, the project will be the first of its kind in the nation run by an electric

cooperative, in this case, the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative. It will be in conjunction with the coop’s \$23 million solar power effort, which also is funded by a federal grant.

Deadlines on saving fish, cactus set

A US District Court in Arizona has ruled the US Fish and Wildlife Service must decide whether to protect the Rio Grande shiner by 2026 and the Clover cactus by September 2027. The shiner, advocates say, has been depleted by drought and river fracturing. The cactus, in northwestern NM, is under threat from oil and gas exploration. The advocates expressed pleasure with the court’s action, which they said is a necessary first step in the protection process.

Oil/gas sites gain “Dark Skies” certification

Three areas within the NM part of the Permian Basin have been certified by the Dark for Park Alliance for reducing light pollution and using responsible lighting practices. The sites, all in Lea County, are the first oil and gas projects in the world to earn this certification. The alliance is part of DarkSky International, which encourages other oil and gas companies to duplicate the effort. The three sites reduced lighting energy use by 60% and cut light scattering into the night sky by 99%.

No protections for Rio Grande cutthroat

Despite its number being reduced by non-native species and habitat loss, the Rio Grande cutthroat trout will not be listed as endangered, federal officials have decided. Efforts to list the fish have been going on for decades. But successful conservation efforts have reduced threats to the cutthroat, and that was cited for the officials’ decision.

SB 21: protecting New Mexico’s waters

BY TRICIA SNYDER
CHAPTER WATER CHAIR

An effort years in the works to better ensure New Mexico’s waters are protected awaits the governor’s signature. SB 21, sponsored by state Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, Sen. Roberto Gonzales, D-Ranchos De Taos, and Rep. Kristina Orteza, D-Taos, includes three mechanisms to better ensure our most precious resource is protected against pollution and degradation.

First, the bill provides authority for the state Environment Department to take over the issuing of permits for those federally protected waters under the Clean Water Act. Known as “primacy,” New Mexico is one of only three states in the nation to leave this to the Environmental Protection

Agency and taking it over has been a discussion for years.

Pushing this idea further was the rollback of federal protections in the US Supreme Court decision, Sackett v. EPA. This decision redefined what is covered by the Clean Water Act and left over 95% of New Mexico’s waterways open to pollution and degradation. American Rivers named all of New Mexico’s rivers the most endangered in the nation in 2024 because of this decision.

Although New Mexico has water quality standards in place, meaning the Environment Department is able to react to a pollution event after it occurs, the state’s waters remain vulnerable without the ability to permit water uses to proactively prevent these events from occurring.

As water quantity declines, with a 25% reduction in overall supply expected over the next 50 years, it becomes harder to deal with these pollution events and underscores the need to prevent them before they occur. SB 21 puts in place a state-led permitting program to protect the vast majority of New Mexico’s waters with no federal protection under the Clean Water Act.

The bill also adds needed authorities and creates a fund to clean contaminated groundwater sites. Many of these have been neglected and abandoned for decades with no clear responsible party, and they also don’t qualify for federal cleanup funds.

The bill had a long path through the legislature, with three committees on the Senate side, which included a long

list of amendments to better align the state program to the Clean Water Act and sufficiently define liability around contaminated groundwater sites.

There also were floor amendments on the Senate side addressing industry concerns, and two further committees on the House side. All this vetting has created a strong bill that balances the needs of industry with sufficiently protecting New Mexico’s water quality.

This effort has been strongly supported by the Rio Grande Chapter and a broad coalition of environmental, community health, and Tribal community groups. To date, the bill passed the Senate with a 25-16 vote and the House with a 43-25 vote, and awaits the governor’s signature, who highlighted this effort in her 50-year water action plan.

EARTH DAY FESTIVAL APRIL 13

Get your green energy rebates now

BY CAROLINE FUNK
CHAPTER
COORDINATOR AND
CHAPTER EARTH DAY
COMMITTEE

Never fear, state and local utility rebates for home weatherization are still available, even as the federal government may pull back on money-saving clean energy funding. The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Energy Guides at the 2025 Earth Day Festival New Mexico (earthdayfestivalnm.org) will help festival-goers learn about money and energy-saving rebates and incentives to make their homes and transportation clean, comfortable, convenient and cost-effective.

The Earth Day Festival will be held on April 13 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Balloon Fiesta Park in Albuquerque.

New Mexico was in the forefront of applying for federal funding to pay for state-level rebates and incentives to make energy-saving home improvements affordable. And so, even while federal programs are at risk, New Mexico’s state programs and local utility programs still offer rebates and incentives and federal

funds still seem to be coming through.

The Energy Conservation and Management program offers rebates for qualifying ENERGY STAR®-certified electric appliances and energy-efficient upgrades. These rebates are for income-limited homeowners with a maximum rebate of \$14,000 per address. The program is being launched in phases, so you can take advantage of rebates as they become available. Visit the Energy Conservation website to start accessing purchase coupons and rebates now (<https://clean.energy.nm.gov/>).

Local electricity utility PNM, among others in the state, offers a wide variety of rebates for energy-efficient appliances, and it’s possible to sign up for a home energy check-up (<https://www.pnm.com/rebates-and-discounts>).

If any of the appliances in your home are about to fail or you want to go clean energy, visit the Energy Conservation website and PNM or your local utility company website to be sure you are buying qualified appliances and can get the rebates.

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and partners at the Earth Day Festival will focus on how New Mexico’s families can access rebates and incentives. Energy Guides, Rio Grande Chapter volunteers, will be on hand to help people find resources at the Festival.

Energy Experts at the Festival can also answer specific questions about electric vehicles, solar, heat pumps, weatherization, or whatever questions about going electric you may have when switching to energy-saving electric home appliances. The Energy Guides and Experts will be available all day. Just stop by the Energy Expert booth with your questions after visiting some of the great vendors and displays – or after taking the kids to the rock climbing wall.

At the Earth Day Festival, we aim to make sure thousands of our neighbors save money while they increase their energy efficiency at home and on the road. That’s good for our friends and neighbors – and good for our environment.



Join us as we celebrate and work to protect the Earth! The global theme for Earth Day 2025 is “Our Power, Our Planet.” It is a call to action for all of us to embrace renewable energy and make a lasting impact on our planet’s future. We’ll continue making Earth Day a way to deeply engage with our climate solutions — from insulating your home to installing solar to purchasing an EV.

Sunday, April 13, 2025 10a.m.-4p.m.
Balloon Fiesta Park

Parking is through the North Gate entrance.

Ride with Sierra Club

SUNDAY, APRIL 13
Bike Ride to Earth Day Festival, 9:30 a.m-noon

Ditch the car and avoid traffic for Earth Day and ride with us to the Earth Day Festival at Balloon Fiesta Park. We’ll start from Montgomery Park and ride up the diversion channel, enjoy the fair and return. The route is considered “easy.”

A road bike and helmet are required. Bike valet service will be provided.

Sign up for the outing (see page 12) and register for your Festival ticket online at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/earth-day->

festival-nm--2025

The trip leader is Patrick Burton and you can contact him at 505-550-5534, patrickburton9@icloud.com if you are a new or rusty biker.



Riding the border wall. Photo by Erick Meza.

earthdayfestivalnm.org

Climate adjustment day for Global W.E.

BY GENIE STEVENS
CHAPTER CLIMATE EDUCATION
DIRECTOR

Preparing for their Big Day at the NM Legislature is always a huge deal for Global Warming Express students. In 2012, the day was called Renewable Energy Day, and since then the Chapter’s environmental day at the Roundhouse, which features the Global Warming Express kids headlining the noontime rally and press conference, has gone by various names.

None, however, have proved to be as uncannily ironic as this year’s “Climate Crisis Day.”

Preparation at Global W.E. schools in Raton, White Rock, Tijeres, Taos and Santa Fe included civic engagement study, speech preparation, nature observation and the sketching and painting of large art signs depicting what each child saw as “beautiful in the natural world.”

We planned a gathering of all of the Global W.E. kids from around the state for the morning of March 6 at Acequia Madre Elementary in Santa Fe with a 25-minute Art March to the Roundhouse to follow.

This was to coincide with the arrival of the 36-student Acequia Madre Choir, joined by Santa Fe djembe drummer, Fred Simpson. He planned to perform the Swahili song “Sisi Ni

Moja” (We are One) at the outset of the rally, followed by six Global W.E. students giving memorized speeches based on their experience of analyzing and creating arguments for the passage of Sen.Pro Tem. Mimi Stewart’s Clear Horizons Act.

On the evening of March 5, news of impending high winds in Santa Fe and other areas for the following day began to circulate. By 10 p.m., the bus company that we booked to transport students from all Global W.E. locations except Santa Fe decided it would not be able to drive in such high winds and canceled the trips.

Santa Fe Public Schools, reacting to the news that PNM might cut all power in in the city the next day as a precaution against wildfire, canceled in-person school for March 6 and called for a day of remote learning.

These cancellations eliminated the possibility for the choir, the drummer and the six student speakers to attend the legislative session.

Early on the morning of March 6, one bus from Chamisa Elementary School in White Rock, was able to make the trip, and the aptly named



Global W.E. students from Chamisa Elementary School in White Rock at Climate Crisis Day at the Roundhouse on March 6. Photo by David McGahey.

Climate Crisis Day began. Global W.E. students who arrived at the Roundhouse were able to meet and speak to their representatives, sit in the galleries during House and Senate sessions, tour the Roundhouse and take part with their art signs in the noon press conference. Fortunately, thanks to Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman and Climate Organizer Melissa Bernardin, the other Global W.E. groups had a chance to visit the Legislature and to follow in the footsteps of the group from White Rock. Climate Crisis Day became Climate Adjustment Day! The fact that Climate Crisis Day was disrupted by extreme weather only further demonstrates the urgent need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Feminism and activism

BY BERIT ROBNETT
CHAPTER INTERN

The Rio Grande Chapter welcomes a second spring intern into our activism. Berit will be with us through the spring semester as we focus on the legislative session and then the Earth Day Festival.



Photo by: Selfie

Hello, my name is Berit Robnett! I’m from Albuquerque, and I’m finishing my final semester at the University of New Mexico. I’ll be graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Earth and Planetary Science and a minor in Women’s and Gender Studies.

I’m passionate about environmental justice and women’s rights, and I’m thrilled to bring that passion to the Sierra Club.

It’s a privilege to

learn from the chapter’s impactful work in environmental advocacy and to join an organization that aligns with my own values.

Through this internship, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how the Sierra Club drives change through government and community outreach. I’m excited to contribute my energy and dedication to supporting environmental action in my beautiful home state.



SIERRA CLUB
RIO GRANDE CHAPTER

Students join fight against climate change

BY CAROLINE FUNK
CHAPTER COORDINATOR

The Chapter is bringing on new grassroots activists with a year-long service learning program at South Valley Academy (southvalleyacademy.org).

We also are working with three other schools in Albuquerque to include high school students in grassroots environmental actions. For example, students joined us for our Land, Water and Wildlife Day and Climate Crisis Day at the Roundhouse during the legislative session.

South Valley Academy, which opened in 2000, is one of the region’s oldest charter schools. Its mission is to prepare young people to become independent, lifelong learners who are ready

for college, career and civic engagement. Service learning is required for all high school students at the academy.

The Sierra Club’s service learning classroom throughout the year has brought in fundamental methods of organizing around a cause.

We introduced the Pueblo and Diné partnership to fight against damage from oil and gas exploitation in the Greater Chaco landscape.

The students worked with an art activist to learn how to get their message across in multiple media. The Chapter’s Zero Waste team taught about microplastics while the City of Albuquerque presented about recycling and waste management, among many other topics shared by partner

organizations. Along with students from Cottonwood Classical, Atrisco High and Albuquerque Academy, the South Valley students joined the chapter’s rally days at the Roundhouse. Nearly 100 students learned to lobby and prepared statements about the impacts of climate change and their demands for actions. If you are a teacher or Environmental Club adviser, contact us if you would like to see environmental grassroots activism and lobby training at your school. We are always looking to include students in our Sierra Student Coalition program. Email riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org or call 505-243-7767.

Join the Rio Grande Chapter

You can join the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club for only \$15. Membership includes both the national Sierra Club and the local Rio Grande Chapter.

Online: Go to sc.org/JoinNM
By phone: Call Member Care at (415) 977-5653. Be sure to say you are joining the Rio Grande Chapter.
By mail: Send a \$15 check with your name, address and phone number to: Sierra Club, Attn: Member Services, 2101 Webster St., #1300, Oakland, CA 94612. Please include the code F94QB17041 in the memo line of your check.

Kids need support now

Join the Global W.E. solution

Join us in mentoring climate science, regeneration and becoming part of the solution with leadership training, public speaking, letter-writing and performance skills grounded in nature-awareness and mindfulness practices.

- Apply today to mentor with the Global W.E.-Global Warming Express program, now in its 13th award winning year, in partnership with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.
- Train to co-mentor students in grades 4-6 for the 2025/26 school year.
- Generous stipend.

For more information, email Genie Stevens at genie@theglobalwarmingexpress.org



Photo by Esha Chiocchio

Feed local soils,
reduce emissions,
create green jobs...

INVEST IN COMMUNITY COMPOSTING!

Expanding *community composting* in Albuquerque requires a *community-centered* compost facility . . . so Little Green Bucket is going to start one, and we need your help!

Learn more about our vision
and our bond offering at
bonds.littlegreenbucket.com



Disclaimer: the Sierra Club has not endorsed this product; this is a paid advertisement.

Legislative, continued from page 3.

- of their income on their utility bills.
- SB 23 - OIL & GAS ROYALTY RATE CHANGES (Muñoz/Stefanics) - allows the State Land Office to charge as much as 25% royalties on high producing oil and gas lands in the Permian Basin, bringing the rate up to par with Texas and ensuring a fair income for SLO beneficiaries.

Disaster Mitigation

- SB 33 - WILDFIRE PREPARED ACT (Wirth, Stefanics/Gonzales, Vincent) - Provides \$10M in grant money to fund fuel removal within 5 feet of fire prone structures, helping to increase the likelihood of insurability of buildings, especially homes.
- HB 175 - FOREST & WATERSHED BUFFER PROJECTS (Vincent/Ortez) - Helps protect our communities that interface with forests while also preserving the essence of communities that live alongside nature.
- SB 31 - ZERO-INTEREST NATURAL DISASTER LOANS (Campos/Sanchez) - Provides loans to local jurisdictions and co-ops for federally declared disaster recovery until it can be paid back with FEMA money.
- SB 383 - FLOOD RECOVERY BONDS & GROSS RECEIPTS (Ezzell) - Allows municipalities to generate funds to pay for flood recovery through bonds and gross receipts taxes.
- HB 191 - WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION & PREPAREDNESS FUNDS (Small) - Creates fund for wildlife prevention and recovery.

The budget

Sometimes the policy we build doesn't require additional funding. But so often it does, so you can't just pass a bill, you need to make sure that there's money in HB2, the budget bill. This year was a very successful budget year for our climate initiatives. In this year's

budget alone there are close to \$300M in climate solutions and economic transition investments alone not including agency base budgets and funds for lands, water and wildlife.

This year's tax bill was one to watch. Each year the finance and tax committees reserve capacity in the budget for tax credits, which they usually pay for with tax income. This year Chair Nathan Small of House Appropriations realized that oil and gas industries pay different tax rates, and that by equalizing those rates there'd be enough money in the budget to provide a total personal income tax break for individuals earning less than \$72K a year, which could be transformational for working families who struggle to pay for childcare, health expenses, food and utilities. But once again the oil and gas industry flooded the airwaves with protest. How dare we charge anything more on this struggling industry (read irony)! And the Senate removed this source of income from the bill and instead worked in a conference committee to take the needed funds from the next fiscal year budget.

That's a wrap for now and we didn't even tell you about the bad bills we stopped and the important work of our partners in the Indigenous community (allowing tribal regalia in graduations as well as language immersion in tribal compact schools, both of which passed), in the immigrant community (keeping MVD from selling private information to ICE, which passed, and an attempt to keep state prisons from serving as deportation camps, which didn't) and in the democracy community (another attempt to pay legislators a salary, which failed, and ban pocket vetoes, which now goes to the voters)...just some of the thousand and a little more bills introduced this session.

This legislation is the result of the work of dozens of partner organizations, bill sponsors, community-based advocates and coalition and team work that is only implied in this article. Thanks to each person who worked to bring this legislation forward!



Above. Grassroots activists at Lands, Water, and Wildlife Day rally on Feb. 20. Many of the activists are students with the Semilla Project. Photo by Camilla Feibelman. Right. Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman leading the Climate Crisis Day Rally on March 6. The rally was impacted by high winds and travel restrictions for students, but legislators and activists stood for New Mexico's climate together. Photo by Max Underwood.



Sustainability focus of next two Sierra Club and Beer meetings

BY SUSAN GORMAN
CENTRAL NEW MEXICO GROUP CHAIR

Your Central Group is planning a full slate of programs for Sierra Club and Beer. Our next presentations will focus on sustainability with meetings in April and June. On April 4, we'll feature Let's Make Albuquerque a Sustainable City. The City of Albuquerque is committed to supporting the goals of the 2021 Paris Climate Agreement despite the US withdrawing from the agreement again. Come hear how the city is approaching sustainability and climate planning at the local level – from clean transportation to green buildings, waste, recycling and the “circular economy.” Ann Simon, sustainability officer, and members of her team, Alice Main and Sandra West, will be on hand to

present and answer questions. Then on June 6, we'll feature Let's Make Sure We Maintain a Sustainable Water Supply, too! The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority is responsible for ensuring that when we turn on the tap, pure, clean water comes out. The Water Authority must do this today and continue to do it far into the future. It takes this responsibility seriously and in 2016, it published Water 2120: Securing our Water Future, a comprehensive Water Resources Management Strategy. Mark Kelly, Water Resources Division manager, will tell us more on June 6. Overall, Water 2120 provides a robust framework for the Water Authority to manage and secure Albuquerque's water resources, ensuring a sustainable water supply for the community's future.

- **DATE:** April 4 and June 6
- **TIME:** 7-8:30 p.m.
- **PLACE:** St. Mark's Episcopal Church
431 Richmond Pl NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106
- **RSVP** at <https://www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/>



Third annual member appreciation picnic

BY TERRY OWN
CENTRAL NEW MEXICO GROUP

Calling all Sierra Club members and friends for our Third Annual Member Appreciation Picnic. **WHEN:** Saturday, June 14th, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. **WHERE:** Capulin Spring Picnic Site in the Cibola National Forest **DIRECTIONS AND INFORMATION:** <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/cibola/recarea/?recid=64196>

Bring a potluck offering to share. If your last name starts with A-H, bring appetizers and salads; last name starts with I-S, main entree; last name starts with T-Z, desserts. Drinks, chips, plates, utensils and napkins will be provided by the Central Group. We have a few surprises planned during the day, so don't miss out. For those that don't have a Cibola Forest pass or National Parks Pass, we will have a limited number of free parking passes to distribute, first come-first



2024 Member appreciation picnickers enjoying a lovely day at the national forest. Photo by David McGahey.

served. Otherwise, you'll need to pay \$3 cash at the self-pay station at the picnic area.

Please register at this link no later than June 12: <https://rb.gy/pqwnl9>.

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Getting outside together is a way to influence climate views

BY DEBBIE BRYANT
CHAPTER OUTINGS CHAIR

Many of us are unsure how to communicate with climate deniers these days. My experience has been that there's still one arena where we can communicate in a friendly way – on a hike or outing. We don't lecture on the trail, but some participants bring things up and it's appropriate to briefly address them. Sierra Club events are publicized everywhere and are free to all. This provides one of the few remaining

opportunities to interact and lightly influence people of different mindsets. For example, on hikes I have heard comments like “all recycling just ends up in the landfill anyway.” The need to breathe while hiking makes it easier to listen to comments like this and stay calm. This is important as it provides time to plan your response. Two popular ways to influence others that I think are appropriate are: 1. Facts, figures and first-hand knowledge. For example, “We've visited our recycling

facilities and can see the material being sent to market, especially aluminum and cardboard.” And, 2. The “bypass method,” where you acknowledge a bit of what the person says while expanding with details. For example, “Yes, the oil industry oversold the ability to recycle plastics and hid the effects of plastics on testosterone. That's why I'm using less plastic these days. But aluminum and cardboard are definitely recycled here in NM at various plants. We have tours if you want to go see for

yourself.” Success looks like a small victory as it's unlikely you can change a mind in five minutes, and I don't recommend ruining your hike with an argument. If you make a small impact, that is enough. I remember at the top of a nearby peak we hiked. I heard, “I guess climate change must be real, it's never been this warm this time of year before.” I count those “awareness moments” as a win. So



Chapter leaders getting outside together at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Debbie Bryant.

I encourage you to have short environmentally aware conversations and not to get discouraged!

Reforming the State Wildlife Dept. & Game Commission after 10 years

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY and TERESA SEAMSTER
CHAPTER WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

It has taken almost a decade of advocacy, coalition building and meetings to produce a three-part bill that covers the oversight, mission and funding needs of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The goal is to meet the coming environmental challenges not imagined when statutes first created the agency and the State Game Commission a hundred years ago.

The widespread support for this bill crafted by state Rep. Matthew McQueen, D-Santa Fe, and with strong advocacy by co-sponsors state Sens. Pete Campos and Crystal Brantley, R-Elephant Butte (a rancher and Republican working to secure additional Republican support), Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, and Rep. Nathan Small, D-Las Cruces, has made the current version going to the governor’s desk.

This legislation overhauls an almost century-old approach, mission and funding source for managing our state wildlife. It provides a framework for better expertise and representation on the State Game Commission, authority to manage all wildlife species as deemed necessary by the newly renamed Department of Wildlife and receive enhanced funding from the Land of Enchantment Fund and newly established GRO (Government Results and Opportunity) fund starting at a combined \$6.6 million annually to pay for additional staff and projects.

The bill was amended several times but all the sponsors and members of the large coalition of organizations backing it say it will still strongly benefit wildlife and that the overall intent of the bill remains intact.

Nevertheless, after waiting on the governor’s desk for three days, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham vetoed the provision requiring that a Game Commissioner

could only be removed for cause. But she signed the rest. Game Commissioners are now Wildlife Commissioners, the commission seat dedicated to a non-game oriented conservationist and the seat dedicated to a wildlife biologist remain. The Governor will still have to choose candidates for the Commission from a list provided by a nominating committee to further help filter politics out of the nomination process. The license fee increases (primarily raised for out-of-state hunters and anglers) will add another \$10 million to the agency’s budget, and all wildlife, including pollinating insects and animals like bats and porcupines are now protected by New Mexico law.

Thank you to everyone who contacted their legislators and the governor to help make this happen. We’ve come a long way since 1923 when the Game Commission and Department were first created. Here’s to another hundred years of vibrant wildlife populations in New Mexico.



Small raptors, hummingbirds, quail and almost all perching birds rely on insects for protein at some point in their lives. But insect populations have dropped dramatically in the last decades. SB5 allows the newly named New Mexico Department of Wildlife to potentially address this decline in our state. On the left above, a Hepatic tanager offers his fledgling a beetle. To the right above, an American Kestrel has caught a grasshopper. Photos by Mary Katherine Ray.

A bosque walk

BY JOHN STOTT
RETIRED ENGLISH PROFESSOR

When the forces threatening the natural and human world seem almost overwhelming, a person must temporarily retreat to regain the strength to resist. This morning, I didn’t turn on the radio, the TV or my computer. And I didn’t read the newspaper. Instead, I went for a walk along the bosque.

I needed a restorative walk, and this seemed the best place to take one. There weren’t many people around: a couple walking their old dog, a group of play-schoolers frolicking among last fall’s shriveled leaves and snapping old twigs, a young man taking photographs of a roadrunner.

There were birds. A Red-breasted nuthatch and its mate perched on a limb by the river, jauntily flocking their tails. Two mallards splashed madly into mid-stream as I passed. From a pond through the trees came the honking of those most ubiquitous of Canadians, wild geese.

The landscape was grey, brown and straw – with a few dashes of green supplied by the occasional juniper. But the winter colors didn’t seem dead. They suggested the dormancy of life as the trees and grasses rested, preparing to

provide a rush of color in a few weeks. Much of my walk was along the Aldo Leopold Trail, named in honor of the ethical and scientific ecologist who had stressed that the land was a community of interrelated soils and water, vegetation and animals. Human beings were part of this community as well, and they had an obligation to treat it with love and respect. The bosque was being restored by people with love and respect, back into a healthy, balanced community. As my walk ended and I headed toward the street where I’d parked my car, I too felt restored. The sun broke weakly through the gray clouds, a sign of brighter, warmer days to come. At the edge of the path, a little girl and her grandfather crouched close to the ground, intently examining some treasure she had found, I thought of lines from Thomas Hardy’s poem, “In Time of the Breaking of Nations”: “These shall go onward the same, though dynasties pass.” My walk through the woods, reading information signs with quotes from Leopold’s wise sayings and the sight of the small child refreshed me and gave me the energy I needed to join the resistance against the forces that destroy.

Outings News

BY DEBBIE BRYANT
CHAPTER OUTING CHAIR

Congratulations to Antoinette Reyes in the Southern Group. Antoinette led a hike at Lucero Canyon to see some petroglyphs and fossils near Las Cruces in February. They are now a certified Level 1 outings leader.

Also, congratulations to Nancy Havelok in the Northern Group. Nancy has re-certified as an Outings Leader.

ICO (Inspiring Connections Outdoors) will

be scheduling an introductory session soon in Santa Fe to encourage volunteers for hikes with youth.

We want to encourage those in the Santa Fe/Albuquerque area to sign up, because if we don’t engage youth, we will have a harder time to persuade them to be environmentally friendly as adults.

This is a great, fun way to give back and doesn’t require a large time investment.

Please email newmexicoico@gmail.com with any questions or if you are interested in joining ICO.

We are developing more in outings in Southern New Mexico. If you are interested in joining the next outing in Southern NM, you can find them on our website under events. Contact Antoinette Reyes at Antoinette.Reyes@sierraclub.org or 575-342-1727 if you are interested in joining the next outing in the Las Cruces area.

Depending on the interest, Southern Group will start hosting more regular outings based on attendance and will prioritize areas that have four or more people interested.

You do not have to be a member to join an outing, so see you out there!

30x30 in the Land of Enchantment

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
CHAPTER MINING CO-CHAIR

In late August 2021, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed an executive order to protect New Mexico’s lands, watersheds, wildlife and natural heritage to help put America on the path to protecting 30 percent of our land by 2030. That order is still in effect.

The governor promised to designate an additional 20% of New Mexico as climate stabilization areas and recognized the need to protect migratory wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, we have fallen far behind other states in protecting our one-of-a-kind heritage.

Today, just 6.1% of New Mexico’s land is protected compared to 12.5% nationally. And only 2% of New Mexico is protected at the highest level of federally designated wilderness. This is the smallest amount in any Western state.

The executive order (<https://bit.ly/4hVbUpI>) set goals that are consistent with the scientific consensus to keep average global temperature increases below 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming and highlighted the need for fast action on climate change. This approach is consistent with the federal government’s America the Beautiful Initiative announced under the Biden administration (<https://bit.ly/4j4ISGg>), which recognizes that the protection of 30 percent of the world’s lands, freshwater and oceans by 2030 can significantly contribute to mitigating climate change impacts.

The governor’s executive order specifically directed state agencies with regulatory authority over natural resources, wildlife and outdoor



Taos Valley Overlook at the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is an area protected by the Bureau of Land Management. Photo by Teresa Seamster.

recreation to use existing programs across all land types. It also urges them to leverage state and federal funding to the fullest extent, engage with federal land-management agencies in planning and coordinate with the Indian Affairs Department and stakeholders.

What qualifies as Geographic Area Protection (GAP) status?
Under the Biden administration’s 30x30 national framework, protected lands fall into four categories:

- **GAP 1:** Full Protection, wilderness and parks
- **GAP 2:** Partial Protection, monuments
- **GAP 3:** Multiple Use, including Inventoried Roadless Areas and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- **GAP 4:** Private land, with no designated protections

New Mexico’s 30x30 goal is to protect 30% of 77.7 million acres or a total of 23.3 million acres. Currently,

GAP 3 Multiple Use Lands provide the greatest opportunity to change their status to protected land. For example, approximately 5.2 million acres of inventoried roadless areas are candidates for being designated as additional wilderness.

A month before the Trump inauguration, the Biden administration joined the US Fish and Wildlife Service in announcing \$122.4 million in grants through the America the Beautiful Challenge. It remains to be seen if those grants will still be allocated to landscape-scale conservation projects across 42 states, 19 Tribal nations and three US territories.

In the Biden administration, 30x30 America the Beautiful program conserved and restored more than 45 million acres of land and waters. New Mexico has the opportunity to add significantly to that common heritage. This urgency is all the greater under Trump’s proposed sell-off of public land that puts our progress at risk.

Energy storage is next frontier

BY JOHN BUCHSER
NORTHERN GROUP CHAIR

When the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine, we need to store energy from those sources to meet the needs of our homes and businesses.

The much-needed next step is energy storage, which can store energy for later use, providing grid reliability and flexibility. There have been concerns with recent fires at battery energy storage systems (BESS) facilities, but technology and safety has rapidly evolved to address those issues. Battery storage facility fire codes and construction codes were updated in 2024.

Now, we are at a point when battery storage facilities are even safer.

A typical battery storage facility resembles a shipping container with racks of batteries inside. With a thousand or more individual batteries in a container, it is important to have several layers of safety systems to address the failure and possible fire in a single cell before it impacts its neighboring cells. With updated safety strategies and standards to reduce potential risk, there have been no fires that have escaped a battery storage facility site.

AES is a Fortune-500 US-based global energy company that is working to accelerate a clean energy future. The current landowners of Rancho Viejo have a large tract where they and AES are seeking permitting for

a combined solar and battery storage facility system that is capable of powering over 30,000 homes in Santa Fe. Rancho Viejo was originally a large ranch that has over the last several decades hosted the housing community of Eldorado. The property has many very favorable features: 1. A large area with minimal vegetation and thus low fire risk; 2. Close proximity to an existing PNM electrical substation; 3. A nearby fire station; and 4. A location for a battery storage facility that is a mile and a half away from the nearest homes.

The County of Santa Fe recently changed the way that it handles permitting of this type of facility. The first step is for the applicant and interested parties (both for and against) to attend a hearing before a hearing officer. Then the parties appear before the County Planning Commission. In this case, the hearing officer recommended denying the

permit, but the Sierra Club was granted standing to appear before the Planning Commission, where the project gained near-unanimous support.

One of the opponents to the project has promised to appeal it to the County Commission. AES must also submit the project to PNM, and if accepted (a battery storage facility is a requirement), the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission must approve. We hope it makes it through the maze of approvals.



Battery storage unit. Photo courtesy of AES.

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Trump goes after EPA methane rules

BY ANTOINETTE REYES
SOUTHERN NM ORGANIZER

The Trump administration’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has decided to formally reconsider the Endangerment Finding of 2009, described in Project 2025, which allows the agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

While Trump is attacking the agency from the inside, the legislative branch is attempting to roll back all environmental decisions made at the end of the Biden administration’s term, including the Waste Emission Charge, a fee on polluters’ excess

methane emissions.

The Endangerment Finding, first issued by the EPA in 2009, is based on overwhelming scientific evidence that greenhouse gases like methane contribute to climate change and harm public health.

It provides the legal foundation for the EPA to regulate climate pollutants. As many of you may know, one of the climate pollutants that we have worked on tackling is methane pollution because it is a highly potent greenhouse gas.

Methane traps significantly more heat than carbon dioxide in the short

term, making it a major driver of today’s climate crisis. Cutting methane pollution is the fastest and most cost-effective way to slow global warming immediately. Beyond climate impacts, methane emissions release harmful co-pollutants that cause respiratory illnesses and other health issues, particularly in communities near oil and gas production.

Support for reducing methane waste and pollution is widespread and bipartisan. Polling shows that more than two-thirds of voters in key oil and gas-producing states favor stronger methane safeguards to protect public health, clean air and the climate

while creating jobs. Even major oil and gas companies, including BP, Equinor and Oxy, have supported EPA methane regulations to ensure a stable regulatory framework for the industry. Methane mitigation not only protects the environment but also generates well-paying jobs across the country.

Fortunately, New Mexico boasts its own nation-leading methane and ozone rules and will hopefully adopt some aspects of the federal rules that were finalized in 2024. In the meantime, New Mexico Permian Basin communities will be continually exposed to emissions unregulated in Texas.

Public land under threat from Trump efforts

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY
CHAPTER PROGRAM MANAGER

In the second Trump presidency, the administration is moving fast to dismantle the nation’s environmental protections.

These range from suspending a wide range of rules and policies passed during the Biden administration to firing thousands of employees who manage our public lands to propping up the fossil fuel industry and ignoring all signs of the climate crisis.

In his short time in office, President Trump has issued a flood of executive actions threatening gains in climate policy, renewable energy development and environmental protection.

The threats are especially evident in Executive Order 14154, “Unleashing American Energy” (<https://rb.gy/8ysc7w>), which directs federal agencies to suspend or rescind most of the policies adopted during the Biden administration aimed at balancing responsible resource development with a transition to a renewable energy future.

For example, newly nominated Interior Secretary Doug Burgman issued Secretarial Order 3418 (<https://bit.ly/3FQ5IIG>) which carries out elements of the “Unleashing American Energy” agenda by suspending parts of the Bureau of Land Management’s Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Rule adopted in 2024.

The Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Rule raised oil and gas royalty rates and minimum bids on parcels when companies expressed an interest in drilling on public lands, eliminated non-competitive oil and gas leasing that locks up lands from other uses like recreation or conservation and increased the minimum bond amounts operators paid to cover clean-up costs on newly leased parcels.

The secretarial order also directs suspension of the BLM’s Public Lands Rule, also known as the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule. This rule, also issued in 2024, put conservation on equal



A flare at an oil and gas well site in the Greater Chaco region. Photo by Miya King- Flaherty

footing with other uses like resource extraction and grazing that have long been prioritized by the BLM.

These are just a couple of advances being dismantled under the secretarial order. More directives are attacking the expansion of renewable energy, protecting endangered species and using science to guide decision-making. The list goes on.

Executive Order 14154 has broad implications for our state as over 30% of New Mexico’s lands are federally managed.

Already we are seeing lands in the Greater Chaco region in northwest New Mexico slated for auction at the November lease sale.

But we have been here before. Under the last Trump presidency, we protested every lease sale and were able to slow permit approvals and development.

It won’t be easy, but collectively we can hold the line and protect our lands, communities and climate.

For calls to action, please follow the Sierra Club Public Lands Action Team at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/publiclandsactionteam>.



Horses grazing near an oil and gas well site in the Greater Chaco region near Counselor Chapter House. Photo by Miya King-Flaherty.

Chapter leaders needed

The Rio Grande Chapter is looking for volunteer leaders.

Compliance officer

The Chapter Compliance Officer advises Chapter political activists on questions about how to conduct our electoral activities in compliance with state and local campaign laws and Sierra Club policy.

This is an essential position. If we don’t have a compliance officer, we can’t have a political program.

This would be a great way for an attorney (active or retired) or any person comfortable reading statutes and regulations to help the Chapter accomplish its legislative goals. Contact Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com.

Legislative Chair

The Legislative Chair represents the Chapter and works under the general direction of the Chapter Lobbyist to “trouble shoot” in getting priority legislation passed or defeated in committees during legislative sessions. If you were fired up by the action during the 60-day session, sign up now to be a leader next January.

This is a dynamic role and requires the ability to work as part of a team as well as independently.

This requires working with the Chapter staff and activists to understand legislation and its impacts, including its impacts on the different constituencies represented by our allies, as well as building relationships with those other allied organizations.

You will need to develop talking points that volunteers can use when they speak to legislators about why they should vote as we wish and provide feedback to our lobbyist about what we learn.

The duties include coordinating with other volunteers to ensure that there is a Sierra Club presence to present our position to committees. Contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Assistant webmaster

The webmaster manages the Rio Grande Chapter website, and our intense activity across several campaigns means that there are a lot of updates. The chapter uses wordpress, and the chapter webmaster would be grateful to have help in updating our online presence.

The duties include coordinating with the webmaster to learn the system and take on updates as needed. Contact Caroline Funk at caroline.funk@sierraclub.org.

We look forward to seeing you outside at our many and varied offerings this Spring. Sign up for outings at: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar.

See Santa Fe Sierra Club Outings at <https://www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/>

Check <https://www.facebook.com/NMSierraClub/events> page for some of the Southern group events.

More outings will be added, so please check these links periodically.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 5
Fort Stanton Historic Site - Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area (NCA), 10 a.m.-12 p.m.**

Join us for a leisurely hike on the grounds of the Ft. Stanton Historic Site in Lincoln County, famous for Smokey the Bear and Billy the Kid. Surrounded by the Snowy River NCA, we'll discuss the cave system and its background. There are over 73 miles of sustainable trails that wind through open meadows of juniper and pinon. There will be great views of the Sacramento, Capitan and Vera Cruz mountains. We'll also discuss the historic background of this intact frontier fort. The trail length is approximately 3 miles and is a loop with a minimal elevation gain of 100'. Limit to 8 people and no dogs. Deadline for registering is April 1. Trip Leader: John Pijawka, 575-937-7422, jastro@windstream.net. Level: Easy Location: We'll meet at the Fort Stanton Museum 104 Kit Carson Road, Fort Stanton

**SATURDAY, APRIL 12-13
Introduction to Backpacking, Overnighter**

This is the perfect outing for those who have never backpacked before and would like to give it a try in a low-risk environment, accompanied by experienced mentors. We will meet at the trailhead and backpack roughly 3 1/2 miles into the backcountry, set up camp and explore the area, where there are petroglyphs and slot canyons. In the evening, we'll enjoy the stars and learn about backcountry safety. On Sunday, we'll continue until mid-morning then depart. Participants should be in good physical condition, be able to hike at least six miles while carrying up to 20 percent of their body weight, and climb 500 vertical feet over uneven terrain. This outing is appropriate for children 14 years of age and up when accompanied by parent/legal guardian. It will include a service component, such as light trail maintenance. Register for the outing no later than April 8. This outing is sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and is open to veterans, active duty and civilians alike. Trip Leader: Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net Level: Moderate if you are at a reasonable level of fitness Location: San Ysidro, NM



Mary & Katie Roda, Poone Haghani and Nora Ellis snowshoeing with Debbie Bryant. Photo by Debbie Bryant.

**SUNDAY APRIL 13
Earth Day Energy Guides and Experts, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Join us and help your neighbors learn more about saving money while they weatherize and go electric! Learn more on page 5.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 13
Bike Ride to Earth Day Festival, 9:30 a.m.-Noon**

Ditch the car for Earth Day and ride to the Earth Day Festival at Balloon Fiesta Park. Avoid traffic. We'll start from Montgomery Park and ride up the diversion channel, enjoy the fair, and return. A road bike and helmet are required. Bike valet service will be provided. Step 1: Sign up as you normally do for an outing; Step 2: Purchase a \$5 ticket online at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/earth-day-festival-nm--2025> Trip Leader: Patrick Burton, 505-550-5534, patrickburton9@icloud.com Level: Easy Location: Meet at Montgomery Park and cycle to Balloon Fiesta Park

**SATURDAY, APRIL 19
Inclusive / Accessible Mindful Birding: Sit & optional walk, 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**

If you are new to birding, a disabled birder, seasoned birder, or just want to enjoy a nice morning in the Mesilla Valley State Park, you are welcome. Your guide – Holly loves exploring and sharing two of her greatest passions: birding and mindfulness practices. She says directing attention to the present moment with kindness and without judgment can lead to well-being. Quick IDs won't be the focus of this outing. This part of the park has brick pavers and a network of crushed gravel/sand paths that weave throughout the area. We'll spend up to 45 minutes here, where there usually are a variety of birds. After, we will have a short time to share any reflections. If you'd like to continue with an optional walk, we will explore. Trails are a mix of crushed gravel and sand that is firmly packed, but both have some sections that are sandier and softer. We will take a pace that accommodates the slowest person and allows for frequent pauses and time for noticing and reflection. Both trails have several benches along the way. Trip Leader: Holly Thomas, hubern1@sbcglobal.net Level: Easy/ Accessible Location: Mesilla Valley Bosque

State Park Las Cruces. Parking: Two ADA van-accessible spots available, parking lot is crushed/packed sand/gravel mix.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 23
"Fire and Water", 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.**

We'll be exploring the South Fork area of the Lincoln National Forest close to the South Fork Campground and the South Fork Trail No.19. We'll discuss the federal seasonal public water system of the campground and its requirements of the EPA Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Along Trail 19 we'll discuss the original Bonito pipeline history. The pipeline is on the National Register of Historic Sites. We will hike to the White Mountain Wilderness boundary, skirting Rio Bonito along the way with several stream crossings. Also, we'll visit Bonito Lake. We'll be doing some short off trail hiking, so sturdy boots and hiking poles are strongly recommended. This will be an all-day event, so bring lunch/snack/water. Elevation is a moderate 250 feet with roughly 4.5 miles of hiking with stops as needed. Limit to six people and no dogs. Deadline for registering is April 23. Trip Leader: John Pijawka, 575-937-7422 jastro@windstream.net Level: Easy Location: Lincoln National Forest.

**SATURDAY, MAY 3
Early Migrating Birds Along the Animas River in Farmington, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.**

This trip is about three miles round trip along trails on flat terrain. Leisurely pace. We will compare resident birds with early migrants passing through. Eighteen year-olds and up only. No dogs please. Limit of 10 people. Register no later than April 30 Trip Leader: Mike Foster, 303-594-1431 mike4ffoster@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: Riverside Nature Center, Farmington, NM

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 14
Zero Waste Tour of the Rio Grande Soil Amendment Facility, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m.**

Come see how biosolids from the Wastewater Treatment Plant are blended with other components and turned into compost. We will be able to see the large Scarab machine turn the windrows inside out to



Alan Shapiro leading an outing with avid hikers in the Ojito Wilderness. Photo by Debbie Bryant

aerate them. Register by May 12. Trip Leader: Laurie Zunner 505-440-5337 lmzunne@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: 7400 Jim McDowell Road, Albuquerque

**THURSDAY TO SUNDAY
MAY 22 - 25
Rio Grande Del Norte – Wild Rivers Service Trip**

This is a continuation of work done by club volunteers last year at the El Aguaje group camp, working on the Rinconada Trail at Wild Rivers. It's possible to see bighorn sheep and to fit in a hike to the river (warning: strenuous/steep). This is also a great place to ride a bike. We will meet Thursday afternoon and eat dinner and talk. Friday we will start at 9 a.m. and work a shift in the morning, with an optional second afternoon shift. Saturday will be a repeat of Friday's schedule. Sunday open for individual exploration. Tools will be provided by the BLM. Bring work gloves, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, a hat, and a water bottle. Water is available at our campsite. Trip Leader: John Buchser, jbuchser@comcast.net, 505-231-6645 Level: Moderate Location: Wild Rivers Recreation Area, North of Taos

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7
Late Migrating and Early Summer Birds Along the Animas River in Farmington, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.**

We will start at the Riverside Nature Center in Farmington NM, and enjoy an easy birdwatching stroll along the river. This is about a three-mile round trip along trails on flat terrain. Leisurely pace. This should be the peak time for migrants. Eighteen year-olds and up only. No dogs please. Limit of 10 people. Register no later than June 4 Trip Leader: Mike Foster, (303) 594-1431 mike4ffoster@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: Riverside Nature Center, Farmington, NM

**THURSDAY, JUNE 19
Zero Waste Tour of the Cerro Colorado Landfill, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (time TBD ~1 ½ hours)**

What we've been waiting for! We will meet in the conference room at the main office for an orientation on the operation of the landfill and to ask questions. Then we will go on a tour of the landfill in their van. Limit is

10 people. Register no later than June 16. Trip Leader: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337 lmzunne@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: 18000 Cerro Colorado SW, Albuquerque, NM

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 13-14
Wilderness First Aid Course**

The SOLO Wilderness First Aid Course is a certified, instructor-led two-day first aid course that provides training for anyone who spends time hiking, skiing, etc. Students will have ample opportunity to practice skills in life-like situations, both as patients and caregivers. Attendees must take part in all portions and hours of the course to obtain certification. Why attend?: People get hurt, sick, or lost. Then the temperature drops, the wind picks up, and it starts to rain. Would you know what to do? If you're ever more than an hour away from a hospital or one mile from any road, you need to have these skills. Many backcountry emergencies are preventable, and when bad things happen, sometimes the wrong care can make things worse. Price: \$200 per person. (Participants must commit to attending both days). Class times: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. each day. Register to be placed on the class list. Payment instructions will be sent in mid-July to hold your seat. Class Coordinator: Debbie Bryant, 832-692-1881, bryade@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: TBD - Albuquerque area

Santa Fe area outings at <https://www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/>

Southern NM area outings at <https://www.facebook.com/NMSierraClub/events> page for some of the Southern group events.

ABQ and more outings at riograndesierraclub.org/calendar.

