

New Mexico **WILD!**

The Bi-annual Publication of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Special Recreation Issue

Top 25 Ways to Experience New Mexico's Wilderness!

Volume 13, Number 1—Spring/Summer 2016



New Mexico
Wilderness Alliance

www.nmwild.org

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The Bi-annual Publication of the
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SPRING/SUMMER 2016

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COVER: Photo by Wayne Suggs, "Camping near Massacre Peak," Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Wilderness Recreation By Mark Allison, Executive Director



Based on the baffled looks of the sales person, I suspect I was the first and perhaps only potential customer to take a homemade hiking staff to the auto dealership to test how it fit. It's not that I wasn't interested in the horsepower, gas mileage or safety features, but if I couldn't have fit my walking stick in the model I was considering, that would have been a deal killer. Dorky? You bet. But what is a vehicle really for, if not to get to a trailhead? That was 1993. The car eventually died, but I still have my walking staff.

This issue celebrates our dedication to and enjoyment of our public lands and, in particular, permanently protected designated Wilderness areas. We are so fortunate to live in a place with such a wealth of public land – land owned by all of us – where we can recreate, find quietness and can marvel at the beauty. Our public lands are inextricably linked to our quality of life as New Mexicans, and it is indeed impossible to imagine existing without them.

Recreation is by no means the only value of our public lands or Wilderness, or even the most important. Unfragmented wildlife habitat, biodiversity, keeping at least some places free from roads and development for posterity are all issues we frequently highlight in these pages.

In future editions, we'll delve more into the traditional uses and relationships that are critical foundations of New Mexico's rich cultural heritage. Native Americans have and still use these lands as they have for generations to provide for their families through hunting and fishing, to gather medicinal plants and as sacred ceremonial sites. Rural Hispanic communities rely on public lands for gathering piñon nuts and wood to heat their homes and cook their food. In addition, these protected watersheds are essential for clean drinking water and as the source for irrigating crops.

Since this is public land and owned by everyone, we have a responsibility to be good stewards and enjoy our public lands responsibly. Not all activities are appropriate everywhere. Permanently protected designated Wilderness – representing about 2 percent of New Mexico's land

area – is by law to be free from motorized and mechanized activities. People should be aware of and respect what is legal and appropriate.

We're always looking for volunteers to help out (and to have some fun). One of our recent service projects, for example, was to remove graffiti in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. And as a hiker's discovery last fall of illegal tree cutting by rogue skiers or snowboarders adjacent to the Santa Fe Ski area illustrated, we depend on citizen conservationists to be our eyes and ears. If you see something illegal or inappropriate, please let us know. You can report violations on our website, and we will investigate them and notify the proper authorities.

Outdoor recreation also has become a major economic driver for New Mexico, creating millions of dollars in revenue annually, thousands of jobs and tax receipts for the state and local governments.

And yet recreation isn't even in the top three perceived benefits of Wilderness by the public as the accompanying graph shows. Perhaps surprising, but maybe not.

We can't help but note that there has been much going on lately regarding our public lands both good and bad.

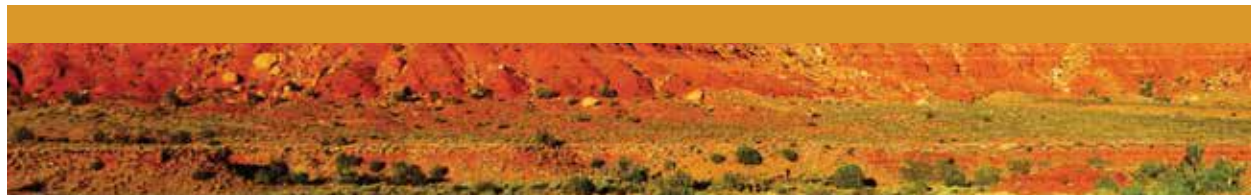
On the positive side, U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, both New Mexico Democrats, have not been resting on their conservation laurels but continue to stand up for our public lands. The critically important Land and Water Conservation Fund was reauthorized, the Valles Caldera was transferred to the National Park Service and the Sabinoso Wilderness – the only Wilderness in northeast New Mexico – will finally have public access soon (more on this inside). Both senators have become increasingly vocal about their skepticism of the merits of the proposed Gila River diversion – the "billion dollar boondoggle" that would change forever one of the last free-flowing rivers in the Southwest. Sen. Heinrich has a guest column in this edition on his thoughts about this threat.

Sen. Heinrich recently introduced legislation (S. 2681), co-sponsored by Sen. Udall, that includes a provision to designate nearly 10,000 acres of new wilderness in the badlands of northwestern New Mexico. The new Ah-shi-sle-pah Wilderness (currently a Wilderness Study Area) would span 7,242 acres just north of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The legislation would also add about 2,250 acres to the nearby Bisti and De-Na-Zin wildernesses, described by the BLM as "a fantasy world of strange rock formations."

Closer to home, the 2016 state legislative session saw the unanimous passage of a senate memorial (SM 11) sponsored by Sen. Bill Soules, D-Las Cruces, affirming support for our public lands. Thanks to the hundreds of you who showed up for the Public Lands Rally day to make your voices heard.

SPOTLIGHT "Wolves. I appreciate that the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance works to protect and enhance the environment of New Mexico where a number of the Mexican gray wolves live. It's an all-encompassing approach that has the potential to benefit all your indigenous lives, including those of the wolves." — Leslie MacPherson, Illinois

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, continued



Comparison of Perceived Benefits of Wilderness

BENEFIT	RATING 1=HIGHEST 5=LOWEST
Air & Water Quality	1.6
Habitat and Biodiversity	1.9
Knowing Wilderness Exists into the Future	1.9
Personal (recreation, spiritual, economic)	2.4

Source: Nat'l Survey on Recreation and the Environment (1,384 respondents)

On the negative side, we've seen the public lands seizure issue heat up across the West. We watched in horror as armed militia occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. Wrapped in flags and using the rhetoric of patriotism and civil rights icons, an array of elements from the fringe do the bidding, perhaps at times unwittingly, of powerful corporate interests vested in taking our national public lands away from us. The armed takeover of a wildlife refuge isn't about exercising rights within the democratic process to inclusively expand access – it's the exact opposite. It's an affront to our democratic ideals, using force and intimidation to take what belongs to all of us in public trust to give to a few for their private use. After the occupation ended, law enforcement officials discovered that the militia members had literally constructed a latrine over a Native American artifact site. I think that describes about as well as anything the sentiment behind this movement.

We'll set aside these more serious issues in this edition, for the most part, and focus on the serious business of recreation and having fun in the sun.

And recreate we do! These pages feature snowshoeing, skiing, hiking (with a walking staff or not), backpacking, horse packing and much, much more. I hope these articles and photographs get you motivated to get outside to en-

joy our public lands and Wilderness as much as possible. We'd like to hear from you about the ways you like to experience Wilderness.

For those wanting more, I'm excited to announce a brand new publication – our "Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness." Part reference manual, part hiking guide, this is the only book that offers a comprehensive list and description of every one of New Mexico's designated Wilderness areas and wilderness study areas as well as recently protected treasures such as the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments. See inside for details about how to get your copy.

For those wanting to join us for guided hikes, rafting trips and volunteer service projects, check out our new website at www.nmwild.org. There are lots of opportunities to get outside and get involved.

See you on the trail. I'll be the one with the walking staff. 🪜

Enjoy!

Mark Allison, Executive Director



Executive Director Mark Allison, Kruger National Park, South Africa; Let us know where you are reading NMWild!



"The state Senate unanimously passed a memorial to support public lands in February. From left to right, Wilderness Society State Director Michael Casaus, Wilderness Alliance Executive Director Mark Allison and NM Wildlife Federation Executive Director Garrett VeneKlasen stand behind bill sponsor Sen. William Soules, D-Las Cruces. Photo: Roberta Salazar-Henry



Correction: In our Fall/Winter 2015 issue, page 23, we unintentionally omitted the name of the photographer of the Manu River jaguar, Andrea Santarsiere.

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The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued respect of New Mexico's wildlands and Wilderness areas.

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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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First Impression

Did you ever stop in your tracks while hiking along your favorite trail or while carrying your kayak and gear to the river? Stop because a depression in the dirt or sand caught your eye?

Maybe you squat down to get a closer look and trace your finger along the edges of what look like four toes. An animal track? You spread your fingers and hover your hand over the image to compare size. Big!

What animal made this track? A mountain lion? With a sharp intake of breath you quickly look up and around. Is this track fresh? Wild animal, or maybe not. You remember folks around here hike with their dogs. Big dogs. Then how do you know if this track was laid down by a lion or a Labrador? You dig in your pack and find that pocket field guide to animal tracks you threw in there ages ago. Cracking open the first few pages you read tips on how to tell a canine track from a feline track.

Canine tracks are symmetrical and longer than they are wide. Draw a line down the middle of the track lengthwise and the left side mirrors the right. On the other hand, feline tracks are asymmetrical and round, with a "leading toe" that sticks out farther than the others. You scratch your head and look back and forth from the guidebook to the track at your feet.

Reading more, you learn about the "plantar pad," which corresponds to your palm. The canine planter pad is small and the top edge is kind of pointy. On the other hand, the feline plantar pad is roundish and huge, the top edge is flattish and the bottom edge sports three lobes.

You don't see any claw marks indicating canine, but the guidebook warns this is not a definitive clue. You scratch your head some more, look down and all of a sudden the clues that scream feline pop out: round track, leading

toe, three lobes. Wow. Satisfied and delighted, you pack up your gear and head up the trail or down the river.

But then you begin to wonder: if that had been canine instead, could it have been a Mexican gray wolf track? You don't even know if wolves are in the area. Didn't you just read something about an end-of-year count that reported a decrease in wolf numbers?

You stop once again, this time to breathe in the fresh air, look up at the clear blue sky and promise that once you get back home you'll search online to learn more about wildlife tracking. Search for more field guides. Maybe take a wildlife tracking workshop. You're eager to learn more about the mountain lion that made "your" track. To learn more about the wolves. With a smile, you again resume your journey. That one track has opened up a whole new world to explore. 🐾



Mountain lion track. Photo: Janice Przybyl

You're eager to learn more about the mountain lion that made "your" track. To learn more about the wolves. With a smile, you again resume your journey. That one track has opened up a whole new world to explore. 🐾

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SPOTLIGHT "I love New Mexico and especially have loved hiking in the foothills of the Jemez Mountains and in the Ojito Wilderness. I continue to support the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, especially because I am grateful for its role in getting the Ojito Wilderness area established." — Dick Miller, California



Mixing Technology and Nature



Early and late day pictures have the most dramatic light. Inset, left to right: Detail images help tell a story. A zoom lens brings a juvenile red tailed hawk into focus without scaring the bird.

Once led a Sierra Club outing hike on which some participants — the younger ones — had their phones and digital cameras out taking picture after picture. An older gentleman remarked despairingly to me as an aside that this generation is unable to experience nature without their electronic devices.

But surprisingly, the digital camera has won me over. The one I carry is a super-zoom point-and-shoot model that weighs less than a pint of water or a pair of binoculars. There are cameras that are even smaller that still have a satisfying zoom capacity and take wonderful pictures. Rather than placing a barrier between the viewer and nature, the camera actually can more thoroughly draw us into nature. Taking pictures of wildlife especially funnels the observer into stillness and heightens every sense. Keeping the camera steady requires a deep breathing that is not unlike meditation. Because digital photography has no film developing costs, there is no restriction on how often the shutter can be engaged. And for wildlife, there are no bag limits or season restrictions (though you should be mindful of the stress human presence causes wild creatures if you get too close). There are photographs to be discovered everywhere you look. The camera can inspire the looking, which



Early morning photographs of deer reveal that one of them is in the process of shedding his antler velvet.

makes us better naturalists.

Part of this enriched experience is the ability to bring home some of that glorious experience of the great “out there.” As much as we’d all like to place the vast views, the green meadows, a gnarled and ancient tree or a fascinating lichen-covered boulder on the mantel, the real thing just doesn’t fit. On a backpack trip, it’s impossible to carry the weight of a found shed antler or keep a dropped feather from becoming crushed. Doing so may not even be allowed. The camera lets you take these treasures and leave them at the same time. The wild animals themselves are never truly ours. The camera reveals each to be a creature unto himself. We can’t really possess them, but the camera enhances our observation. What exactly is that bird eating? By freezing the moment for later observation, the camera can tell you. Does that elk have an injury? He was hiding it so well that it wasn’t even noticeable in the field. This deer has

a notch in her ear. Our paths have crossed before!

I take a camera everywhere I go slung crosswise across my body where it fits handily over the straps of my knapsack. I almost never know what I’m looking for when I set out, but I always seem to find it. 🐾

SPOTLIGHT “I am a teacher in Illinois and have my summers free. I always look forward to exploring the peace of New Mexico’s wild places during these summer months. I try to find a new place to explore every year but especially have enjoyed the Bisti Badlands area. These summer weeks in New Mexico replenish my soul and reconnect me to the home base of Mother Earth. Thank you for working to protect our wildlands — keep up the good work, friends!” — Janet Newton, Illinois



Enjoying and Protecting New Mexico Rivers

Perennial, free-flowing rivers are rare treasures here in New Mexico, but we are blessed with several recognized National Wild and Scenic Rivers (and a few hidden gems).

The Rio Grande was among the first rivers to be protected when Congress passed its national river protection system in 1968. Twenty years later, 24.6 miles of the Rio Chama downstream of El Vado Dam were designated Wild and Scenic. The east fork of the Jemez River and the Pecos River from its headwaters to the small community of Terrerro both were designated in 1990.

In all, 124 miles of New Mexico rivers — a tiny fraction of the state's 108,000 miles of river — are designated Wild and Scenic. Designations seek to balance the nation's rampant water development program with protection of "outstandingly remarkable" rivers.

Two sections of the Wild and Scenic Rio Grande, the Class 4 Taos Box and the Class 3 Pilar Racecourse, attract flocks of whitewater boaters during the runoff season (April-August), including skilled individual boat owners and guests of rafting outfitters. Three other sections of the Rio Grande Gorge also are eminently boatable: the canoe-friendly Orilla Verde run, the Class 3 Middle Box and the remote Class 2 Ute Mountain run. The Wild and Scenic Rio Grande stretches about 68 miles downstream from the Colorado border.

The Rio Chama between El Vado and Abiquiu reservoirs offers those who are fortunate enough to draw permits an opportunity for wilderness float-camping on 30 miles of Class 2-3 river. A popular day trip is also possible on the final 6 miles below Christ in the Desert Monastery, near Abiquiu.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management's Taos Field Office manages both the Rio Grande and Rio Chama, including the Chama private permit lottery held each January. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance traditionally offers two or three outfitted trips each season, and 2016 promises to be a year of abundant river flows.

Several dozen other of the state's recreational river segments have been found to be suitable for Wild and Scenic protection, including portions of the Gila, San Francisco, Pecos and Canadian rivers. ("Suitability" confers interim protection from water and stream-bank development.)

Unlike most Western states, New Mexico does not have a program to preserve its wilderness and recreational rivers for the enjoyment of future generations. However, there is a growing sentiment for a state system that might highlight the protection of recreational and ecological values of the Pecos River below Villanueva State Park, the Rio Grande in White Rock Canyon and Santa Ana and Sandia Pueblos, the Canadian River near Mora, the San Francisco River near Glenwood and the wild Gila River in southwest New Mexico. All are treasured by the boaters who have run them.

The Gila in particular both deserves and warrants Wild and Scenic protection, which prohibits new development activities in designated rivers. The Wilderness Alliance is initiating a campaign to protect the Gila River's Wilderness, Middle and Lower Box sections, the San Francisco River and their wilderness tributaries.

Dam builders have aggressive plans to tame the Gila and many more Southwestern rivers. Absent a concerted protection effort by citizens who love wild rivers, the number of healthy waterways are almost certain to decline. 🏹



Participants on last year's Wilderness Alliance rafting trips enjoyed the whitewater on the Rio Chama. Photos: Southern Exposure, www.raftphotos.com

NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE 2016 RAFTING TRIPS. GO TO WWW.NMWILD.ORG TO SIGN UP!

SUNDAY, MAY 1

BERNALILLO RIO GRANDE FLOAT TRIP

Join the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Quiet Waters Paddling and Far Flung Adventures to explore the primitive aspects of the lifeline of New Mexico from Bernalillo to the Alameda Bridge in Albuquerque (water level permitting). Our experienced guides and conservationists will provide history and discuss important issues about this highly managed but gorgeous stretch of the Rio Grande. Cost: \$75, including canoe, kayak or inflatable kayak; gear; guides and shuttle. Length: 5-6 hours. Please bring your own lunch.

SATURDAY, JUNE 4

RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT ONE-DAY RIVER RAFTING TRIP

We will spend the morning rafting down the Lower Gorge of the Rio Grande near the Orilla Verde Recreation Area, with beautiful scenery and just a couple of mellow rapids. After a lunch break, we will enter the section called the Rio Grande Racecourse, which features intense whitewater with rapids named Albert's Falls, Herringbone, Narrows, Big Rock and Sousehole. Cost: \$90, including lunch, paddle boat, gear, guides and shuttle.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7

RIO CHAMA ONE-DAY RAFTING TRIP

The Rio Chama in northern New Mexico is America's newest Wild and Scenic River. On a dam-controlled stream impounded by El Vado Reservoir, the 10-mile Rio Chama rafting trip begins near the tranquil setting of the Christ in the Desert Monastery and ends at Big Eddy. We will meet at 9 a.m. at Ghost Ranch and be off the river at about 5 p.m. We welcome first-time rafters 6 years of age and older. Our guides offer a choice of paddle raft or inflatable kayak on this Class II river. Cost: \$115, including lunch, paddle boat or inflatable kayak, gear, guides and shuttle.



4

HUNTING By Nathan Small, Staff

Window into the Wild

The deer blinked, but I couldn't. My eyes were glued to the desert muley herd browsing near where I lay. When I peeked, a large ear would flicker or nose look up from eating. With the wind in my favor and worried that my movements would scare them, I decided to take a nap. Such can be hunting in wilderness.

Often our wildlife interactions are brief: glimpses of running deer or rocks rumbling as an elk herd scrambles off, screened by trees. Wildlife in wilderness follow their normal routines. There, the careful hunter or other visitor can observe animals calmly eating, napping or socially interacting. Because of wilderness hunters frequently spend time in such company, they experience many of these moments. This window into the wild world becomes its own pursuit.

For Megan LaDriere, one of those moments came while elk hunting in wilderness. She writes, "I was on an archery hunt, sitting in my makeshift blind waiting for a bull elk to come in. His cows came in and were within 5 yards of me and they had no idea I was there. I watched them interact and play with each other for 45 minutes. It was by far the absolute best experience of my life!"

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance board member David Soules remembers a day in the West Potrillos over 20 years ago: "I once spent almost an entire day alone in the Potrillos WSA, beginning with a hike in the dark in search



A hunter in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

of mule deer. The details aren't important (although they remain incredibly vivid in my mind), but I gained large measures of both respect and insight for the relationship between hunters and quarry that day, a relationship that goes back to the very beginnings of our ancestral heritage. It helped form my personal beliefs in terms of ethical hunting and the valuable role sportsmen can and should play in wildlife and land conservation."

John Cornell from the New Mexico Wildlife Federation observes, "Wilderness means the best habitat to hunt," and LaDriere notes, "I've always seen wildlife in wilderness." The wilderness window into wildlife is there for us all. Getting out early, staying out late and treading lightly are ways to open it up. Whether we carry a camera, gun or bow, the memories, experiences and insight we bring back from pursuing wildlife in wilderness help carry on a proud conservation legacy. 🏹



5

CAMPING By Bob Julyan

Camping with Kids

Okay, like a good outdoorsy parent you've taken your children hiking and chances are you all loved it. Maybe you're now ready to take your kids' outdoors experiences to the next level — camping.

Fortunately, many of the principles for successful camping with kids are the same as for hiking, and most apply to car camping as well as backpacking — dump the idea that backpacking is only to get far, far away. The delights of a night in the wilderness are available within a mile or two of the trailhead.

- Pick an appropriate destination, one that is safe, not too challenging and above all with features of interest to kids. A stream, a pond with tadpoles, easy trees and rocks to climb, a sandy arroyo. You don't have to tell kids what to do; they'll figure it out.
- Make the camp meals special and take food and treats the kids love. S'more, Skittles, hot dogs, whatever their favorite foods are.
- Make a campfire at night. Sure, campfires are frowned upon by some, but it will be rare to camp in a place without an existing fire ring. Use it and explain to the kids the importance of keeping a fire under control and making sure it's completely out when you leave. Nothing connects children with the outdoors and earlier wilderness travelers like sitting around a campfire, talking and telling stories.
- Have the right equipment. A warm sleeping bag, comfortable shoes and warm, comfortable clothing.
- Educate your kids as to hazards. "The first person to spot poison ivy gets M&Ms." Avoid rattlesnakes entirely by going to a higher elevation or camping during cooler months. Talk to your children about bears and lions, but keep the danger in perspective. Insist everyone wear sunscreen. Take first aid equipment.
- But above all, have fun. Relax, don't try to control everything. Play games, tell stories, explore. Revel in the unexpected. Let kids try new things and stretch their limits.

BOB'S RECOMMENDATION FOR AN EASY BACKPACK

In Albuquerque, from the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area east of Tramway, it is an easy 2-mile hike into Domingo Baca Canyon. Kids will enjoy the stream, climbing trees and tram cars overhead. Meanwhile, you will be out of sight of Albuquerque, yet close and safe.

Follow the Domingo Baca Trail, No. 230, to the canyon. At 0.25 mile into the canyon, the trail briefly leaves the stream, branching right and going up a short, steep bank; this junction is not well-marked but the trail soon be-

comes distinct again, and the little forested stream it leads to after 0.25 mile is delightful. This stream flows through a narrow canyon that runs almost a mile back toward the cliffs; it's lined with lush, green vegetation and has several tiny waterfalls. Yet, someone viewing the Sandias from the west would not suspect the canyon existed, deceived by distance and relief into believing the Sandias' west face to be just a barren, vertical wall. The western Sandias have many such canyon surprises, and upper Domingo Baca Canyon is among the best. It's fun for children to explore, and the gnarled oaks are great for climbing. Here also are several good camping sites. Although this is primarily a day hike, it also makes an easy, low risk overnighter — and your car will be safe in the patrolled parking lot. 🏹



Horned lizards, or horny toads, and other wildlife are sure to capture children's interest. Below: Nature offers kids plenty of opportunities for fun. Photos: Tisha Broska

SPOTLIGHT "I often go hiking in New Mexico wildlands with my girlfriends. We love to explore New Mexico wild places." — Judy Ackerman, Texas

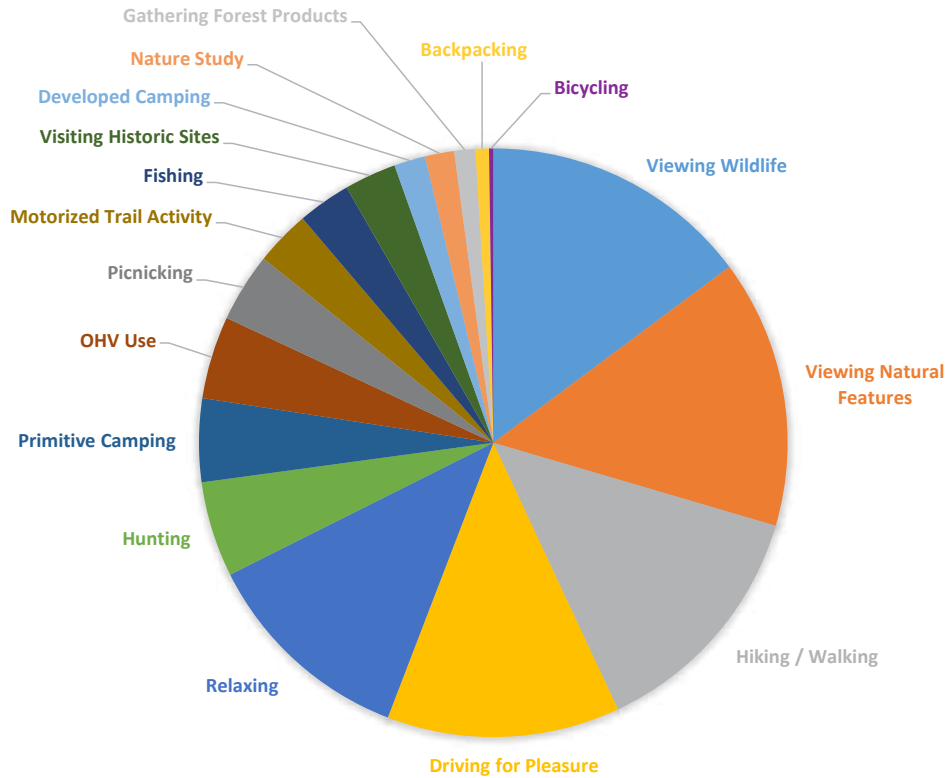
Land conservation efforts for New Mexico's wild public lands need citizen support to thrive. New Mexico Wilderness Alliance delivers on your desire to protect it forever. Please go to NMWILD.ORG and give your support today.



RECREATION USAGE IN THE GILA NATIONAL FOREST

Word cloud based on Carson, Gila and Santa Fe National Forests' recreation usage.

PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN FOREST ACTIVITIES ON THE GILA NATIONAL FOREST



Demographic results show that over 72% of visits to the Gila National Forest are made by males. Hispanics account for over 35% of all visits to the Gila. Native American visitors account for almost 4%. Children under the age of 16 are only a little more than 10% of visits. Over 30% of visits are people age 60 or older. The Gila serves mostly two distance zones. About 55% of visits are from people living within 50 miles of the forest; however, almost 30% are from 100 to 500 miles away.

From USDA Forest Service, NMR, National Visitor Use Monitoring Results
<http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nfs/nrm/nvum/results/A03006.aspx/Round3>



Photo: Madeline Alfero

6 KAYAKING

By Nathan Newcomer, Staff

A View from the River



Since moving to Silver City in the summer of 2013, I have had the sincere privilege to hike and backpack some of the most remarkable country in the state, if not the world. The Gila Wilderness, Aldo Leopold Wilderness and surrounding Gila National Forest are chock full of tremendous beauty, solitude and challenging terrain. I have also discovered a newfound passion

for hopping in my kayak and paddling my way down the Gila River.

To experience public lands and wild places by hiking and backpacking is one thing, but to immerse oneself via the avenue of a small inflatable boat and paddle is quite another. In many respects, you are at the mercy of the river and where the water wishes to take you. Numerous obstacles such as downed trees, boulders and debris scattered about from past flooding make the journey much more adventurous, if not adrenaline-inducing. When river flows are high and swift, one's self-awareness and sheer ability to maneuver a vessel become tantamount to preserving both life and limb. However, there are also many instances when the water is calm and the float feels more like a lazy cruise.

One stretch of the Gila River in particular, the Mogollon Box, is an incredible section of water to float. This segment starts near the current Gila Wilderness boundary at Turkey Creek and ends at the confluence with Mogollon Creek. The Gila River corridor here is steep with rock outcroppings on all sides, plus dense riparian vegetation that includes willow stands, cottonwoods, sycamores and other riverine habitat. The color contrasts between the sheer rock outcroppings and the lush river corridor with its canopy of riparian vegetation is stunning. Furthermore, the Mogollon Box area is immediately adjacent to the Gila Wilderness and is itself worthy of Wilderness protection.

The geology of the Mogollon Box area is also noteworthy and rare. The features found throughout the corridor represent a unique combination of geological history that tells a long story of volcanic activity and erosion. Watson Mountain in particular rises 2,000 feet from the canyon floor, demanding one's attention and awe.

The overall scenery and visual attractions while kayaking the Gila River are highly diverse and appealing to the spirit. Needless to say, paddling down the Gila River is all at once a relaxing, heart-pounding and exhilarating spectacle. 🐾



The confluence of the Gila River and Mogollon Creek marks the end of a great river float. Several stretches of the Gila River offer kayaking opportunities in the spring. Photo: Nathan Newcomer

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Board Chair Ken Cole in the Amazon; Let us know where you are reading NMWild!

And Then There Are Some of Us Who Climb Vertical Rock!

Rock climber Bryan Pletta is the owner of Stone Age Climbing Gym in Albuquerque and a New Mexico Wilderness Alliance member. He recently shared some of his passion for climbing in an interview.

Wilderness Alliance staff (WA): *Where did you last climb in New Mexico?*

Bryan Pletta (BP): I climbed at Diablo Canyon outside of Santa Fe a couple of weeks ago. The rock at Diablo is basalt and there are a good variety of single and multi-pitch climbs for climbers of all abilities. There are walls facing in all directions, so the crag is a nice year-round area with excellent cold weather climbing on the south facing Winter Wall.

Getting a tan on a warm February day is one of the great things about New Mexico climbing.

WA: *How old were you when you started climbing?*

BP: I started climbing in 1984 in South Carolina when I was 23 years old. I had friends in college who were climbing and they introduced me to the sport. It was an exhilarating experience and very cool to be part of a small, tight-knit group doing an activity that was completely outside of the norm at that time. It was rewarding to challenge ourselves to do things that we were not sure we would be able to do. I built a lot of confidence and forged some tight friendships in those early years.

WA: *Who taught you to climb?*

BP: My friend Russ Langley took me and another friend, Rodney Turner, climbing for the first time. Russ graduated and left for the Army about three months later, so Rodney and I were on our own. We taught ourselves the basics by reading Royal Robbins' "Basic Rockcraft" and "Advanced Rockcraft" and practicing on the rock. There weren't any classes or guide services, and this was way before there were climbing gyms. All of the climbing back then was what we call traditional climbing, where you have to place your own protection in crack systems, which will hopefully keep the leader off the ground in case of a fall. We had a few close calls and were lucky that neither one of us was ever in a bad accident. This is not a path I would recommend to new climbers; the climbing gym is a great place to learn the basics from professional instructors. If novice climbers want to take the fun outside, I suggest they seek professional instruction or an experienced mentor who can teach them the fundamentals.

WA: *How do you stay fit for climbing?*

BP: I climb at the gym once or twice a week and do yoga a couple of times a week. I am focused mostly on maintaining a base level of fitness, watching my weight and maintaining flexibility.

WA: *What's your most memorable climb in New Mexico?*

BP: I did the first ascent of Aerial Boundaries with my friend Doug Teague in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness in the early 1990s. It is a six-pitch climb rated 5.11d on the Alioth formation in TWA Canyon. The wall is very steep and the climbing is very sustained. We did the climb "ground up," meaning that we started at the ground and pushed the line up the wall to the top without rehearsing moves, inspecting the wall or placing fixed gear from above. We placed the fixed gear by hand while on lead, either at stances or by hanging from hooks or other aid gear. It was an undertaking that took us three years to complete and is still a test piece that has seen only a handful of ascents.



Bryan Pletta climbs Hammerhead rock in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. Photo: Lee Brinkerhoff

The climb required quite a bit of fixed gear due to the steep face climbing that connected crack features on the wall.

WA: *Are there climbs you are looking forward to this 2016 season?*

BP: I am looking forward to spending weekends in the mountains, car camping and sport climbing with my wife, Cristina, and our dogs, Cairo and Duncan. Two of my favorite areas are El Rito in northern New Mexico and the Enchanted Tower near Datil.

WS: *Thank you, Bryan, for the inspiration and for being the mentor that you are to others.* 🐉



Photo: Nick Streit

Escaping the Modern World

When I was a wee kid I got out of the house and into the sticks daily. That was back in the days when kids were supposed to be outside, and that was where I felt normal. (I have excessive-compulsive- dyslexic predispositions.)

I started to hunt and fish — of sorts — in the swamp at a very tender age and would sneak up on deer or catch gruesome snakes. Dangling a piece of red cloth — attached to a safety pin on a string and stick — in front of a frog was as close as I could get to fly fishing in my tiny world. When the frog's long tongue rolled out to eat the "fly," I was hooked like the frog.

Fly fishing gave me something to do outside and was an accepted, genteel outdoor behavior. My temperament soon forced me to try to capture all the planet's fishes, however. Then that got tweaked and by the time I was 10 years old I was selling flies, and then guiding by my teens. Somewhere in there I opened Taos Fly Shop and wrote several books on fly fishing. Yeah, I still was outdoors, but usually guiding or on a forced sabbatical to keep from exploding in the convoluted tourist trap I reluctantly call home.

Before long, I was waist-deep in the gore of modern living. Writing permits for the government, yelling at my editors. Being audited actually made me stop breathing. It's quite the struggle for one who is totally disorganized to turn the trout and the penmanship into cash. I tried to convince the auditors. I got sick with an endless string of health problems, not the least of which was very high blood pressure.

And then I remembered what I was supposed to do and started to get back in the bush. I got a four-wheel drive camper and got farther and farther from town. And as I got deeper into the sticks my blood pressure settled down. It soon became obvious that the farther out I got — the quieter the place, the taller the yucca, the thicker the ponderosa and the more fish and game — the lower the blood pressure.

So that's it. I've been forced back into the bush and have learned that if I come upon a town that has lots of busy people living the high life, I can easily be drawn into the mix. So I make a guerilla strike on a Walmart Supercenter and then examine the map for the next quiet camp.

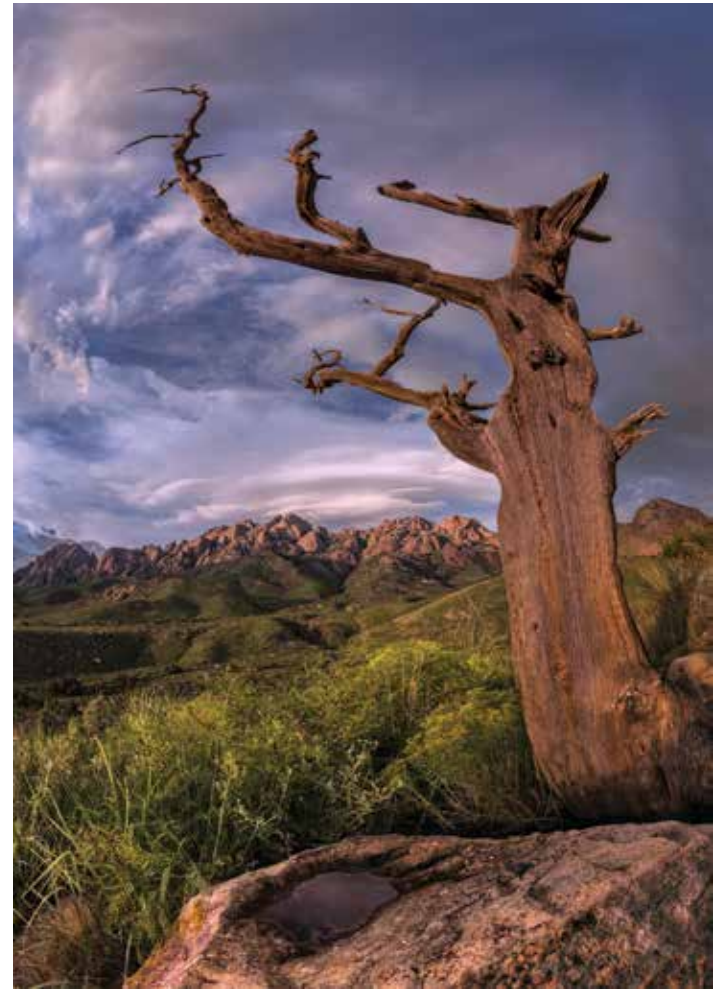
Admittedly, there are parts of the new world order that allow me to operate from such remote places. I write this overlooking a jumble of empty slopes in the Caballo Mountains of southern New Mexico. I will push the send key when finished and then go try to collect some quail for lunch. It's not that far from frog fishing, really. 🐉



Loving your Subject : An Interview with Wayne Suggs



Blood Moon over the Organ Mountains. Photo: Wayne Suggs



The Conductor. Photo: Wayne Suggs

Wayne Suggs grew up spending a lot of time in the outdoors, camping and traveling with his parents. His mother was a landscape photographer who taught him about composition, shutter speed and aperture. At 14, his parents gave him a Nikon camera, and the magic began.

Suggs' love for photography stems from his love of the landscape and from experiences in wild places. He fought the shift from film to digital for a long time and still uses manual settings for all his photographs today. When Suggs finally made the shift to digital, he realized it was a whole new world. He began to process images in a new way, getting results he never could have achieved in the darkroom.

Suggs said his secret to taking great photographs is loving his subject.

"I love wilderness and wild places, and to be able to capture the beauty of the world is so important," he said. "Loving and knowing your environment is my secret. If you absolutely love something and carry that passion, it shows in your work."

Suggs has dedicated a lot of time and many beautiful photographs to helping protect

the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

"I'm so grateful that I did," Suggs said of his contribution. "To get out into these places ... they will now be there for my children and their children. Being able to help with that is so rewarding to me."

Suggs lives in Las Cruces with his wife, Kiki. Their son is a professional soccer player in Colorado Springs, and their daughter is an artist in New York City. Both were brought up in the outdoors and both of them absolutely love wild places. Suggs looks forward to sharing that passion with his new grandson and hopes one day to teach him to camp and show him the glory of photographing the night sky around Massacre Peak.

Suggs loves the Southwest. Places like the San Juan Mountains of Colorado and Southern Utah are a photographer's playground, but he admits that "nothing rivals the Organ Mountains."

To see Suggs' work, visit www.waynesuggsphotography.com.

10 FALCONRY



Photo: Martin Heinrich



Photo: Martin Heinrich

New Mexico a Good State for Falconers

Falconers use a variety of raptors such as the Harris's hawk shown here. Other birds that can be trained for falconry include merlins, Cooper's hawks, prairie falcons and peregrine falcons.

Hawks generally sit on a glove on the falconer's arm and then jump up to chase game. Falcons fly above and wait for the falconer to flush game before diving down. New Mexico is considered a good state for falconry because of the broad range of quarry such as ducks, rabbits and quail to hunt as well as abundant public land and good weather.

Falconers must learn their craft and complete an apprenticeship to be licensed.



Photo: Leah Wilde

11 LLAMA PACKING By Stuart Wilde

Adventures with Llamas in the New Mexico Wilderness



Photo: RyanHeffernan.com



Gentle llamas help promote wilderness recreation. Photo: RyanHeffernan.com

When I crash-landed in New Mexico more than 20 years ago, I had a thirst for adventure and a desire to connect with the natural world. Little did I know that I would wind up hiking around the New Mexico wilderness with a team of rescued pack llamas. Now, as a seasoned wilderness guide and llama trekking outfitter, I am blessed to spend my days hiking and exploring the pristine wilderness areas of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

People always ask me, "Why llamas?" Llamas are the perfect high-altitude, low-impact pack animal and hiking buddy. They have soft, leather-padded, two-toed feet and leave little impact on fragile wilderness trails. They complement my "tread lightly" wilderness ethic and help me to promote wilderness protection and stewardship of our public wild lands.

Llamas are sweet and gentle animals, with curious and amusing personalities. They seem to enjoy being out in the backcountry as much as I do. Hike with a llama sometime and you'll see why these magnificent creatures have found a new home in the high desert and Southern Rockies of New Mexico. I guess you could say I am living the "llama dream." These amazing animals have helped me support my family for more than 20 years and have given me the opportunity to explore New Mexico's unspoiled wilderness landscapes like few others.

Our team of gentle and surefooted llamas have enabled me to explore and share New Mexico's remote wilderness areas with small groups of adventurers, from the alpine majesty of the Wheeler Peak, Pecos, Columbine-Hondo, and Latir Peak Wilderness areas — with lush forests of spruce and fir, hidden alpine lakes and wildflower meadows — to the Taos volcanic plateau and Rio Grande Gorge — with the mighty Rio Grande running wild at the bottom of an 800-foot deep volcanic rift with freshwater springs and ancient rock art — to the incredible alpine grasslands and bristlecone forests of the Valle Vidal.

New Mexico is the birthplace of wilderness, with the Gila Wilderness being designated as the first Wilderness area in the world (40 years before the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act!). Whether you are a llamero or caballero, if you like to hike, camp, hunt and fish, New Mexico has an incredible diversity of wilderness environments waiting for you to explore with awe-inspiring panoramic vistas and that feeling of inner peace and solitude that only being in wilderness can bring.

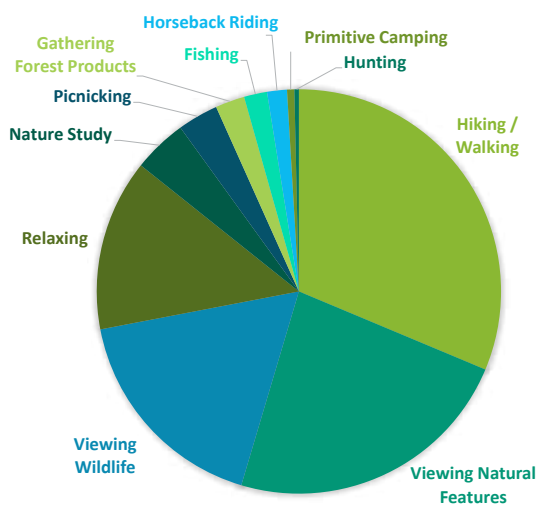
Stuart Wilde is the director and head wilderness guide for Wild Earth Llama Adventures, based in Taos. In addition to their wilderness guide service, he and his wife, Leah, rescue and provide homes for abandoned and unwanted llamas. Wilde is a passionate wilderness advocate and, with the help of his woolly hiking companions, works to protect New Mexico's public wildlands. For more information about llama trekking in New Mexico's pristine wilderness, please visit www.LlamaAdventures.com.



Word cloud based on Carson, Gila and Santa Fe National Forests' recreation usage.

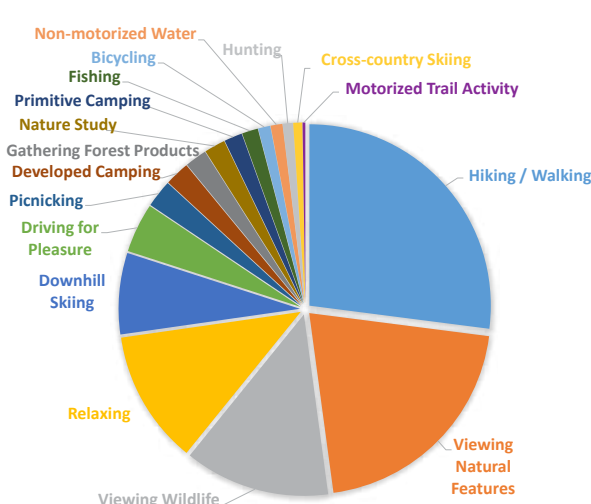
RECREATION USAGE IN THE PECOS WILDERNESS AND THE CARSON AND SANTA FE NATIONAL FORESTS

PARTICIPATION IN FOREST ACTIVITIES ON THE PECOS WILDERNESS



From USDA Forest Service, NMR, National Visitor Use Monitoring Results <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nfs/nrm/nvum/results/U0301002.aspx/Round3>

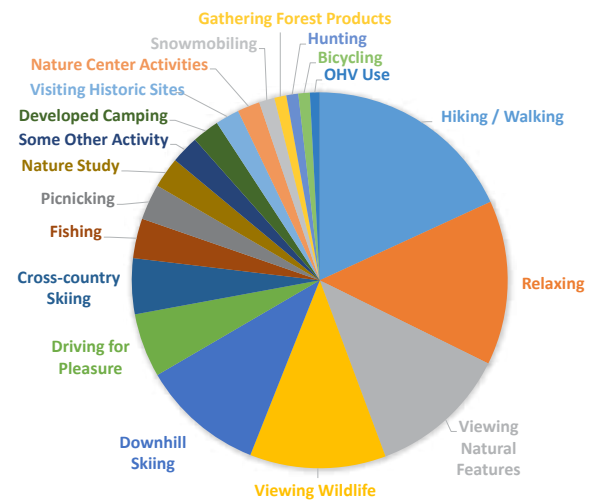
PARTICIPATION IN FOREST ACTIVITIES ON THE SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST



Demographic results show that about 44% of visits to this portion of the Santa Fe National Forest are made by females. Among racial and ethnic minorities, the most commonly encountered are Hispanic/Latinos (14%). The age distribution shows that only 12% of visits are children under age 16. People over the age of 60 account for about 22% of visits. Most of the visitation is from the local area; over 60% of visits come from people who live within 50 miles.

From USDA Forest Service, NMR, National Visitor Use Monitoring Results <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nfs/nrm/nvum/results/A0301002.aspx/Round3>

PARTICIPATION IN FOREST ACTIVITIES ON THE CARSON NATIONAL FOREST



Slightly more than 40% of the visits to the Carson National Forest are made by females. Among racial and ethnic minorities, Hispanics (17%) and Native Americans (5%) are most common. About 18% of visits are from children under the age of 16; people over age 60 account for about 16%. Approximately 30% of visits are from people living within 25 miles of the forest. About the same percentage are people who are over 500 miles from home.

From USDA Forest Service, NMR, National Visitor Use Monitoring Results <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nfs/nrm/nvum/results/A03002.aspx/Round3>

SPOTLIGHT "The first time that I ever spent any time out West was in New Mexico as an intern at White Sands National Monument. During the six months I was there, I had a chance to explore a lot of New Mexico and had some really amazing times in the Gila, which are still really incredible memories. In the 19 years since then I have ended up back in New Mexico at various times and always want to find something wild, it's the state that made me fall in love with the high desert. So, I want to make sure other people have that opportunity." — Nova Clarke, Louisiana



Photo: Nathan Small

Protecting Southeast New Mexico's Wild Caves through Land Management Planning



A caver explores Parks Ranch Cave, a wild cave beneath Carlsbad's BLM lands. Photo: BLM

The caves of southeastern New Mexico are world renowned for their stunning beauty, surreal formations, and unique geology. Outside of Carlsbad, some of the longest gypsum cave systems in the Northern Hemisphere stretch beneath a desert façade, while over 500 known limestone caves lie beneath the Guadalupe Mountains. Together with the uncommon recreational experience they provide, cave habitats support a wide array of sensitive cave-adapted species and serve as important point sources for groundwater recharge. The health of these sensitive and extraordinary resources hinges upon a delicate balance between subterranean and surface conditions.

OIL AND WATER DON'T MIX

Formation of these extensive cave networks is associated with what geologists call a karst landscape. In karst landscapes, weakly acidic rainwater percolates through and dissolves soluble rock layers, such as limestone and gypsum, forming a unique combination of landscape features. Steep cliffs, sink holes, underground rivers, and caves are common in karst areas. These landscapes are commonly underlain by large aquifers with the ability to supply significant quantities of water.

Karst landscapes often also contain significant extractable resources, primarily in the form of oil and natural gas. This phenomenon is exemplified in southeast New Mexico as the majority of the state and federal land here is leased or developed for resource extraction. Oil and gas development in karst

areas risks contamination of area aquifers which could affect local ground water, karst-fed springs, and spring-fed riparian areas, as well as the people and wildlife that rely upon them. The interconnection between water, surface and subsurface land, vegetation, and soils within karst systems means surface disturbance, even if not directly impacting a cave, can change the physical and biological processes occurring underground.

FEDERAL PROTECTION?

Two national parks, Guadalupe Mountains National Park and Carlsbad Caverns National Park, currently protect over 122,000 acres of cave resources and karst landscapes in southeast New Mexico. While this acreage is significant, cave and karst resources extend into public land well beyond park boundaries. Two other Federal land management agencies – the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – administer thousands of acres of karst landscapes here, as well.

To date, over 500 cave features have been designated as significant under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act across BLM and Forest Service lands in this region, with many caves still awaiting evaluation. A “significant” cave is defined as a cave on federal lands that is (1) an invaluable and irreplaceable part of the nation’s natural heritage; and/or (2) threatened due to improper use, increased recreational demand, urban spread, and a lack of specific statutory protection. Unfortunately, this Act does little to protect significant caves from industrial development.

SPOTLIGHT “I have travelled California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah — all great places, always been out camping. So what is it about New Mexico that is so special? Why is it called the “Land of Enchantment?” Because maybe it still is an enchanted country with all of its wilderness that does need protection.” — Petra Ackermann, Germany

CAVING, continued

On BLM lands in southeastern New Mexico, industrial activities associated with oil and gas in sensitive karst areas have shown a dramatic increase over the past two decades and future increases are anticipated. At present, over 75% of lands managed by the Carlsbad BLM Field Office are leased for oil and gas. While pressure for development on USFS lands is not as high, they remain vulnerable as advancements in technology create opportunities for resource extraction in more remote areas. Expansion of these threats can be minimized by reducing the availability of currently wild or otherwise significant public lands to industrial development or by placing limitations on the types of development that can occur.

HELP US PROTECT WILD CAVES!

Two major planning efforts are currently underway that could impact protection of cave and karst resources on public land in southeast New Mexico: The Forest Plan revision for the Lincoln National Forest and the Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision for the Carlsbad BLM Field Office. These plan revisions outline how public lands in this region will be managed over the next 15 to 25 years and provide an important opportunity for placing added protection on both surface and subsurface lands in southeast New Mexico's cave and karst areas. Both the BLM and USFS have the ability to utilize the planning process for temporary administrative protection of wilderness-quality lands and the caves beneath them. Public participation is a crucial aspect of the planning process.

Without proper recognition and management, unprotected wild lands, and the caves beneath them, become fair game for oil and gas leasing or other destructive uses that could alter their ecological integrity and future wilderness consideration. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is advocating for protection of southeast New Mexico's cave, karst, and other important natural, cultural, and recreational resources by encouraging federal land management agencies to first, properly inventory and recognize lands eligible for protection and second, decide to manage currently wild lands to preserve their wilderness character. Please consider adding your voice in support of protection for southeast New Mexico's wild caves and wild public lands! 🦋



Example of a karst landscape in the Carlsbad Caverns National Park Wilderness.
Photo: Joelle Marier

**PROTECT SOUTHEAST
NEW MEXICO'S**



**WILD CHIHUAHUAN
DESERT**

Join Us

For an exploration of Southeast New Mexico's Wild Chihuahuan Desert as we highlight Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands outside of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Look for this graphic as we run a 12-week social media campaign to showcase the sometimes subtle yet spectacular attributes of Carlsbad's wild BLM lands. These social media posts will run weekly throughout the comment period for the Carlsbad Draft Resource Management Plan. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is currently working to gain administrative protection of these lands by advocating for designation as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and/or management as Lands with Wilderness Characteristics. Follow the action link at the bottom of each post to add your voice in support of protecting Carlsbad's wild BLM lands. We need your help to protect these still wild places.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **VISIT OUR WEBSITE.** Follow "Wilderness Defense" links for BLM and Forest Service Planning. Watch for "Action" opportunities.
- **LINK TO ONLINE PLANNING PAGES** for the Carlsbad Field Office RMP Revision and the Lincoln National Forest's Forest Plan Revision: www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Carlsbad_Field_Office/cfo_planning.html www.fs.usda.gov/main/lincoln/landmanagement/planning
- **SIGN UP** for the paper or electronic mailing list for each plan revision.
- **PARTICIPATE IN SCOPING AND PUBLIC MEETINGS** to stay informed, learn about differing perspectives and talk directly with agency personnel.
- **SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS** when draft plans and assessments are released. Take time to write thoughtful comments about the issues you find important.

¹Jones, W.K.; Hobbs, H.H. III; Wicks, C.M.; Currie, R.R.; Hose, L.D.; Kerbo, R.C.; Goodbar, J.R.; & Trout, J. (2003). Recommendations and Guidelines for Managing Caves on Protected Lands. Prepared for the National Cave and Karst Research Institute, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior by the Karst Waters Institute, Inc. Pg. 45

²Watson, J.; Hamilton-Smith, E.; Gillieson, D.; and Kiernan, K. (1997). Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection. World Commission on Protected Areas. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. Pp. 9 - 12

³Analysis of the Management Situation. Bureau of Land Management, Carlsbad Field Office. (Sept. 2014). Pp. 2-15.

SPOTLIGHT "Dog Canyon Trail, a hike in the Oliver Lee Memorial State Park south of Alamogordo! Nine miles out and back, or up and down. Three thousand feet of elevation change, desert to forest. Fantastic views. And the first time, the route is a surprise — you can't see the way up. It seems impossible to scale this sheer bluff — until you do." — Bill Smallwood, Arizona



Adventure for the Young at Heart

I had no idea what the reaction would be from our five over-60 trekkers as they walked the long half mile through the sand amongst the shrubby sage and strange seed pods. This was my first time leading a group of adults in our partnership with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. It was fall of 2015. Would they shriek with delight upon seeing these strange mushroom formations enlivening the landscape for the next mile, as most school groups do? Or would they be content with a photo or two, remark at the strangeness of the landscape and push back to the commissary vehicle for lunch?

Typically, when I take a group to the Ah-shi-sle-pah (Ah-SHEESH-le-paw) Wilderness Study Area, there are 12 to 50 elementary-aged children who absolutely revel in the freedom they find. After we lay out the ground rules and tell them about the dinosaur bones hidden amongst the rock formations, we release them to the boundaries of their own imaginations.

I have never seen children as free as when they are roaming down the wash, crawling into caves and shouting at each other from different overlooks they have discovered. At Ah-shi-sle-pah, I see pure, unadulterated play. I see kids who don't talk to each other in class helping each other in and out, up and down. I see girls who were otherwise obsessed with their appearance, running down a rock slide, releasing all worries.

For this freedom alone, Ah-shi-sle-pah is a magical place, but it is much more than a playground. This wash is a tool to teach Leave No Trace ethics, a symbol of wilderness in the Southwest and an incredible model of geology.

I have been accompanied in my Ah-shi-sle-pah explorations by archaeologists and paleontologists who have helped me to search through the beautiful petrified wood pieces for a rare bone fragment of a giant that roamed here long ago.

When a geologist joined my adventures, I learned about the age of the area, the physical history and the fragility of the rock around us. But my favorite lesson is learned from the rocks themselves. The towering mushrooms symbolize strength and fragility simultaneously. The crumbled rock our feet walk upon holds the impressions of our footprints in an area where no other human evidence is apparent. Until the next rain



A group explores the Ash-shi-sle-pah WSA. Photo: Cottonwood Gulch

washes through the rocks — which could be months in this arid area — the signs of our scuffling leave a lasting impression of our adventures this day.

When our commissary vehicle disappeared behind the hill we had come down and our diverse group of retirees and adult adventure-seekers saw the mushroom rocks in the wash, there were squeals of delight. One woman clasped her hands after weaving her way through the rocks toward an area I've never explored and exclaimed, "Ah! I feel like a KID again!"

Cass Landrum is a group leader, naturalist and associate director at Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions. She led the October 2015 trek to Ash-shi-sle-pah, Chaco Canyon and El Malpais National Monument with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and is looking forward to another collaborative adventure (or two!) this year.



WILDERNESS VALUES By Andrew Gulliford

Wilderness Values and Extreme Sports

When I directed the Western New Mexico University Museum in Silver City, we displayed Aldo Leopold's original 1924 document creating the Gila Wilderness. It was a mere two and a half pages. Environmental paperwork and forest management plans have multiplied like mushrooms since then, but the original premise of wilderness has not changed.

Leopold sought "a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two weeks' pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man." He was seeking to save outdoor recreation where technology would be kept to a minimum and hikers and horsemen could experience nature on its own terms.

A pivotal ecologist whose research and writing bridged 19th century conservation and 20th century environmentalism, Leopold ushered in a wilderness ethic and a broad understanding of habitats and natural processes. He would be chagrined at 21st century extreme sports enthusiasts who treat nature as a "dirty gym" where the goal is not awareness and transcendence but rather adrenaline-laced activities filmed on mini-digital cameras.

Leopold believed wilderness sharpened American character, taught personal responsibility and required humility in remote settings. Like my hero Teddy Roosevelt, Leopold relished "the strenuous life," but he also sought silence, solitude, darkness and the chance to write in his journal before dawn. Leopold's ideas became national law in 1964 with passage of the Wilderness Act, and though we strive to set aside additional Wilderness acres, our most difficult goal is to pass on wilderness values. That's why twice a year I teach a college class titled "Wilderness in America" to reach out to students.

The Greens are graying. Today's generation grew up with mountain bikes, cell phones, social media and a different take on "getting back to nature." They may relish organic food, but fewer folks experience deep backcountry travel. Instead, they often desire dramatic, potentially dangerous front country experiences so when they're done rock climbing, ice climbing, mountain biking or trail running they can hit the brew pub at night and watch their exploits on YouTube.

We did not save millions of Wilderness acres for extreme sports. Yet those of us who still have our original aluminum frame Kelty backpacks must learn to resonate with a younger generation. I'm trying. Some of my students have gone on to become Wilderness backcountry rangers. They're committed. They know why wilderness is important.

"The appealing part of the job is about educating the public on why these special public lands we call 'wilderness areas' are important to us as rangers and why they

should be taken care of. Why does the backcountry matter so much?" asks Ranger Jay Rezabek. He explains, "The real meaning of being a Wilderness Ranger to me is how simple, stark and unspoiled it is out in the Wilderness; a ranger works to keep it that way for current and future generations. It is a job of limitless emotions, a multitude of feelings, treasured memories, rugged landscapes and precious peaceful sounds."

But for other folks in their 20s it's difficult to get weaned from cell phones and computer pads. Their identity is linked to being connected to, not being apart. They do not understand the benefits of multi-day wilderness immersion experiences and creating social networks by sleeping with your friends on pine needles or desert sand.

We have to teach what wilderness means. Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold would agree. The challenge now is not how many miles can you hike in a day, it is how many people you can teach about why wilderness matters.

Andrew Gulliford is a professor of history and environmental studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo. His book "Outdoors in the Southwest: An Adventure Anthology" won the New Mexico-Arizona Book Award for Nature/Environment and the Colorado Book Award for Best Anthology. He can be reached at gulliford_a@fortlewis.edu.



Stephanie Moran and Marcey Oljaos pose in the Bisti Wilderness in northern New Mexico. Photo: Andrew Gulliford



Photo: Pam Bishop

Horseback Riding in the Wild

Horse riding is our favorite way to experience New

Mexico's many wilderness areas. We like to ride the high, wild places. We have ridden in most parts of the Carson and Santa Fe national forests and are always affected by the quietness, solitude and stunning grandeur of our public lands. We particularly like riding in the wildernesses for the extra qualities of wildness, lack of vehicular traffic and more primitive feel to the trails. In the Taos area, these include the Wheeler, Columbine-Hondo, Latir and, particularly, the Pecos Wildernesses. Our spiritual connections are here in the high mountain forests and valleys; in the huge, flower-filled meadows; and on the open ridgelines.

Horses normally tend to be more alert to their surroundings than we are, as well as having much better senses of smell and hearing. Being aware of one's horse's perceptions can lead to a better and more focused appreciation of one's vicinity. Being on a horse immerses us in the animal world viscerally and immediately. We are always fascinated by all the animals we see, having many times crossed paths with elk, deer, bears, bighorn sheep and, of course, countless birds such as hawks, ravens, jays and all the smaller songbirds.

We spend a lot of time just knocking about on our horses, exploring new places and vistas. One of our particular attractions is for the old trails, many of which are prehistoric, or just game tracks from time out of mind. We are fascinated by how first animals, and then people, have found the most efficient ways through the rugged and forbidding terrain. These trails have evolved to their current state by horse travel over hundreds of years. When we ride along them, we find it easy to imagine that we are following blazes perhaps made by such great wilderness advocates as Elliott Barker and Aldo Leopold.

We, and the horses, also really enjoy and appreciate all the little streams that run out of the high cirque valleys and almost every canyon, all contributing to the watersheds that become the Canadian, Pecos and Rio Grande rivers. These streams are the foundations of all life in the mountains, as well as in the communities of the valleys below.

We always feel a wonderful partnership with our horses when getting to the interiors of all the majestic wildernesses that surround us in the Taos area. There is something incredibly special here for all of us. 🐾



Pam MacArthur on the Jicarita Ridge. Photo: Johnny MacArthur

NATIONAL PARKS

America's Best Idea Starving

This year marks the centennial of our National Park Service. Wallace Stegner famously deemed the parks "the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." Unfortunately, even our best idea has been neglected over the years. As New Mexico advocates work to keep our protected federal lands safe, there's another battle looming that we all need to join.

Due to Congress' chronic underfunding of the National Park Service, national parks and national monuments in our state and around the country are falling into disrepair. Damaged trails, closed facilities and safety concerns are taking a toll on our parks, and without Congress stepping up to fund much-needed infrastructure repairs, our parks won't be accessible for our kids and grandkids.

Carlsbad Caverns, for example, has more than \$44 million in maintenance needs. One of the most urgent projects there is repair and maintenance for the elevators that take visitors down to the caverns. The elevators have been out of service for several months, leaving young children, the elderly and the disabled no access to the caverns. Until the elevators are fixed — a roughly \$17 million repair — only visitors who can make the 3.75-mile steep round-trip hike can enjoy New Mexico's national park jewel. The descent and return through the caverns' "natural entrance" is the equivalent of climbing an 80-story building.

Bandelier National Monument also has a staggering maintenance backlog with \$23 million in repair projects waiting for funding. Chaco Culture National Historic Park has a \$13 million backlog. All told, New Mexico's national parks need more than \$113 million in repairs.

The mission of our National Park Service is to protect our nation's lands so that all Americans can enjoy them. Without funding park maintenance, we are not making good on that promise. It's not enough to have environmentally important lands in New Mexico under federal stewardship. We must also be sure that those lands are cared for and maintained for future generations. 🐾



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call your senators and members of Congress today. Make sure they know that New Mexicans want more than just federally protected lands — we also want well-maintained facilities and infrastructure for everyone to enjoy. In this year of the centennial, it is time to reinvest in our national park system.

- Sen. Martin Heinrich: (202) 224-5521
- Sen. Tom Udall: (202) 224-6621
- Rep. Ben Ray Lujan: (202) 225-6190
- Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham: (202) 225-6316
- Rep. Steve Pearce: (202) 225-2365

SPOTLIGHT "We have enjoyed a number of wild areas in New Mexico, including exploring Chaco Canyon and the Chaco outliers on the trade route to the canyon as well as fly fishing the narrow, meandering streams of Valles Caldera. However, our favorite has to be the Gila National Forest, including the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas. This area is special to us because of its great natural beauty and diversity of habitats, allowing us to camp, hike, observe, photograph and explore the Mogollon cave dwellings. It is also special because we appreciate how it helped shape the thinking of the great American conservationist Aldo Leopold, who ultimately developed the plans for the Gila Wilderness, the first ever Wilderness area. Thank you, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, for continuing to preserve such breathtaking and, for that matter, such breath-giving scenery!" — Yvonne and Steve Ross, Colorado



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

Kids, careful for rattlesnakes, play hide and seek behind banana yuccas in the Organ Mountains. Grandparents tell stories under the stars in the Sierra de Las Uvas. Horsemen ride in the rugged Robledo Mountains, and sportsmen pursue desert mule deer and two different quail species in the West Potrillos. All primitive and unconfined activities, and all in wilderness study areas (WSAs).

The word primitive describes wilderness travel. Hiking, horseback riding, climbing, walking — anything non-mechanized. It is unconfined recreation, where only inner boundaries exist. Primitive and unconfined experiences offer balance in our modern, fast-paced world, making wilderness recreation increasingly important.

Eight wilderness study areas are near Las Cruces and another 12 are within a three-hour drive. Some, especially the Organ Mountains, receive heavy use. Runners travel the Baylor Canyon trail or enjoy the Peña Blanca WSA. A weekend family picnic at Aguirre Springs spurs raucous play or quiet reflection, climbing granite cliffs or contemplating views that stretch over 100 miles, two countries and three states. There have even been marriage proposals along the Pine Tree Trail in the Organ Mountains.

Other wilderness study areas are harder to get to. Backcountry hunters and hardcore birders love Cowboy Spring, where the U.S. Bureau of Land Management reports there are 130 species of birds, 40 species of reptiles and 60 species of mammals. The Gila Lower Box, another wilderness study area, boasts 267 species of birds and is one of the best birding locations in the entire region.

Wilderness also can connect us to past peoples. Petroglyphs, pictographs or lithic flakes convey broad cultural heritage. Straining to see an arroyo or vista through the eyes of people who thrived in the same spot centuries earlier evokes a deep and intimate connection. Cultural recreationists include seniors seeking their ancestors, grandchildren forming a connection to the land and all others who take the time to see wilderness through different eyes and different eras. With seniors seeking more active and challenging outdoor experiences, the city of Las Cruces now offers a 50-plus hiking program that frequents wilder-



Theresa, Mark and Robin (the baby) Westbrook hike in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. Photo: Nathan Small

ness study areas. Passing along outdoor skills also is a traditional connection that can be made in wilderness between seniors and younger generations.

Spontaneous recreation based on imagination is around each apache plume, canyon twist or ridge. From tracks on the ground to tales in the stars, wilderness recreation is just waiting to be renewed by the next person to take the next primitive and unconfined step into southern New Mexico's natural treasures. ▲



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CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING By Mark Allison, Executive Director

A Memorable Trip

“Here’s Johnny!”

With my boys’ eyes as wide as saucers (and maybe with a hint of mischievous delight), they watched me do my best Jack Nicholson impersonation from “The Shining” as I chopped at the door with an axe. We were at 10,500 feet, it was January, it was dark and the temperature was dropping rapidly. We’d been cross-country skiing for hours and were fairly exhausted from pulling homemade pulks (sleds) weighed down with the ingredients for three days’ worth of gourmet dinners and an impressive array of adult beverages. We were miles from anywhere. And we were at the wrong yurt.

This in and of itself would not necessarily be a horrible thing, except that we had the lock combination to a yurt many miles away.

I don’t think it is really important to get into who was at fault, how it happened that we started from the wrong trailhead or the range of emotions people evidenced throughout the day when they began to realize we’d been on the wrong trail the entire time. The quiet panic of some probably bothered me the most at the time, though the increasingly hysterical chatter about digging snow caves was also, I thought, a tad overwrought. (Not that I didn’t surreptitiously double check at a rest break that I had brought an avalanche shovel).

I would certainly never point a finger at our friend, which would be particularly unfair, since she was preoccupied with, among other things, carrying and attending to her infant child strapped to her back. The main thing to know is that I kept a cheery smile on my face the entire time, doing my best to convey calm reassurance to the children, showing them that I knew exactly what I was doing and, my, what a wonderful time we were having: “Are those snowshoe hare tracks?” and “How beautiful everything looks” and other confident, distracting patter of that type. It is true that the yurt door did not fare well, but no one was injured, we ended up having the time of our lives, and, of course, the trips you remember are the ones that, well, involve some adventure.

But I’m reminded this was to be a story about cross-country skiing. And what a glorious thing it is! No lift lines, no people, the ability to make tracks and go where your heart desires. Exploring someplace new or one perhaps familiar but with the fresh perspective of a different season and a blanket of snow. The crackle of the wood stove, the hiss of the propane light and the triumphant smile of the night’s Scrabble winner after a day skiing and playing in the snow sounds like heaven to me. ▲

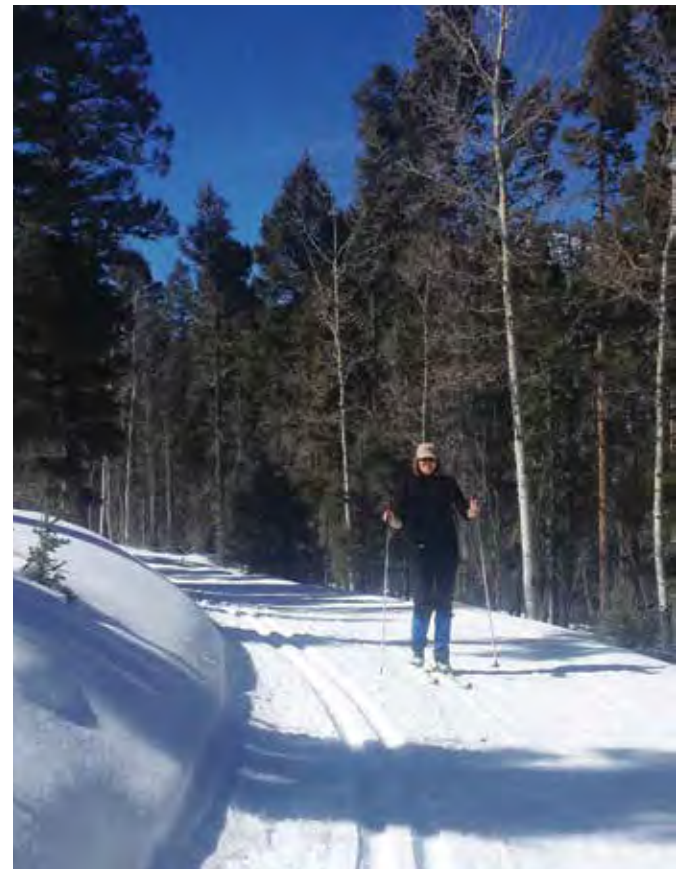
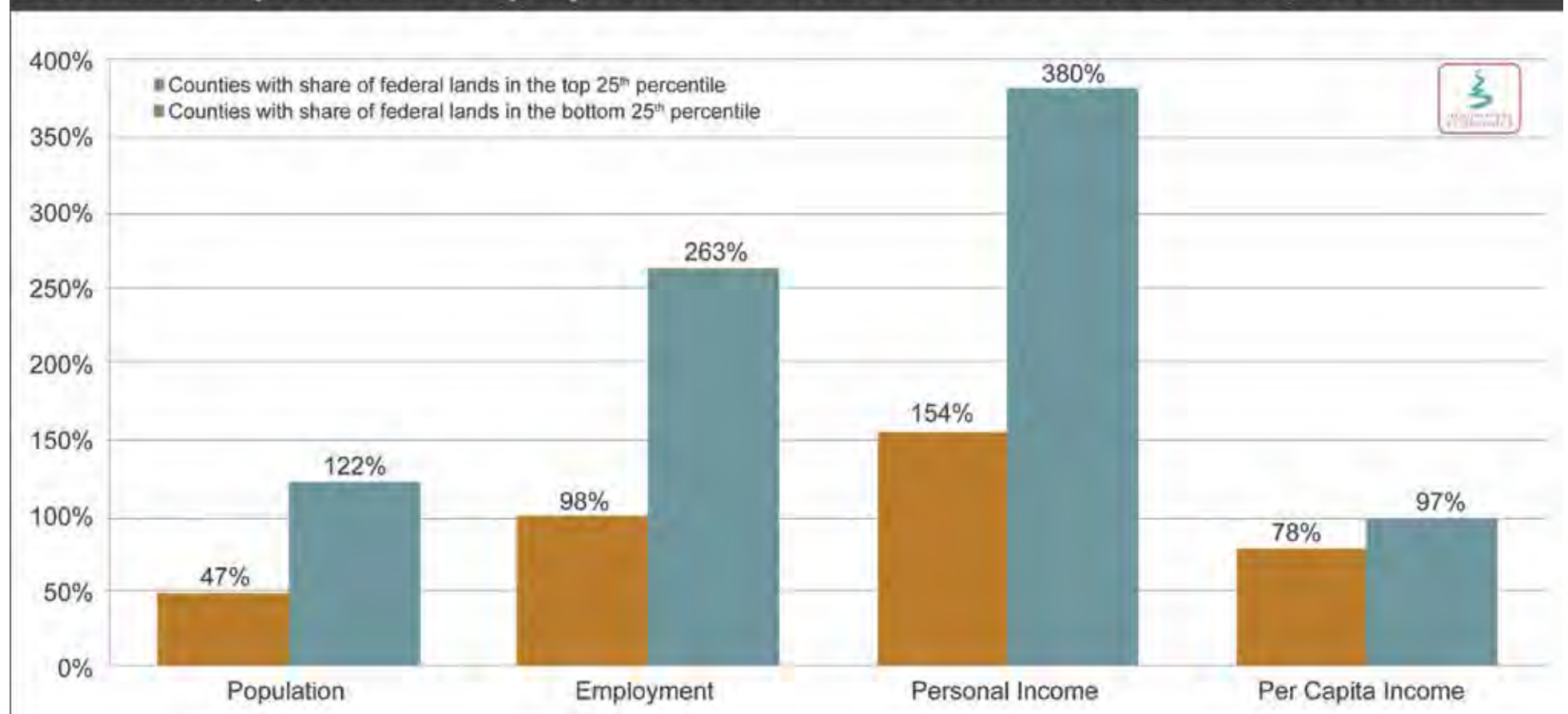


Photo: Tisha Broska

SPOTLIGHT “I am passionate about New Mexico’s wilderness because of the contrast of mountains — snow and ice against the mesa — and white sands of the desert. It is the hot and the cold, the grass crisp with frost in the shadow of a pine tree, while the bark already steams in the heat of the sun. It is the solitude of the land and the darkness of its skies. It is the prairie and the lushness of the Sangre de Cristo range. It is the insatiable thirst being quenched by the Rio Grande and giving rise to the Bosque. That is what I love about New Mexico’s wilderness.”— Arnold Leitner, California

COUNTIES WITH MORE PROTECTED LANDS SCORE HIGHER IN KEY ECONOMIC MEASURES

Percent changes in non-metro western counties in the top 25th and bottom 25th percentiles of proportion of PROTECTED FEDERAL LAND, 1970-2014



From Headwaters Economics, "Federal Lands in the West: Liability or Asset," <http://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/federal-lands-performance>.



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Photo: Tisha Broska

Lonely Planet

The recently designated Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument helped southern New Mexico land a spot on Lonely Planet’s new list of the top 10 U.S. places to visit in 2016.

The monument “shows off the borderlands at their rugged best,” the travel guide publisher says on its website. “Saddle up for a real cowboy adventure, visit places where WWII bombers and Apollo astronauts trained, and trip out in volcanic fields and epic scenery.”

Lonely Planet says Santa Fe and Taos have been tourist destinations for years, but adds, “if it’s Southwestern wilderness you’re after, head toward the border.”

The top places to visit list was posted in March and ranks southern New Mexico ninth. The top three spots went to Philadelphia; Natchez, Miss.; and Yellowstone National Park.

The list appears on LonelyPlanet.com as well as in a free e-book available for download from the website and in an extensive feature in the second issue of the new United States magazine, Lonely Planet, available on newsstands in March, according to the Las Cruces Sun-News.

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks’ Monumental Impact to Economy

“In the year and a half since the designation of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Las Cruces business owners have seen a boost to local tourism and positive impacts on their businesses.”

—Sen. Martin Heinrich

Excerpted from press release, Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce:

“Having the monument is a gift to our community because not only does it permanently protect important and sacred places on our doorstep, it also is becoming a boon to local tourism, hospitality and outdoor industry businesses that have begun using the monument to market our community and promote Las Cruces,” said Carrie Hamblen, Executive Director of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber recently conducted a survey of member businesses and found:

- 65 percent of businesses surveyed say they field questions from customers about the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.
- 32 percent of businesses surveyed use the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in their promotional and marketing materials.
- 20 percent of businesses surveyed have already introduced new products or services directly related to the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks including: mountain bike tours, specialty drinks, running tours, wilderness first-aid classes, iconic monument photography and monument-inspired desserts.
- More than 30 percent of the businesses surveyed said they plan to celebrate the monument’s anniversary with special offers including: discounts on hiking and fitness gear, online hotel discounts, specialty dishes named after the monument and outdoor recreation tours featuring the monument.

SPOTLIGHT “I am a native New Mexican, now living in California. I spent my youth backpacking and hiking in the Gila, Sangre de Cristo, Jemez and Carson forests. At least once a year, I travel back to the Land of Enchantment and get my fix of blue skies and amazing landscapes.”

— Victoria Dye, California



Wild Foods from Wildlands

As spring sets in and mountain snows begin to melt, a wide array of wild foods and medicines are sprouting up and rooting down across New Mexico's wildlands. Our state boasts numerous microclimates and a wide range of topography – great for growth of edible and medicinal wild plants. Nuts, berries, fruits, leaves, fungus, shoots, roots and more are available across New Mexico's wild mountains, forests, grasslands, deserts, riparian areas and points between.

Why forage? It's good for you and it's fun! Foraging and "wildcrafting" provide a way to supplement both food and medicinal needs. Wild plants are known for being nutrient dense, and, surprisingly, the difficult growing conditions so common to this region of the U.S. can actually enhance their nutritional and medicinal properties. Pristine environments, such as New Mexico's wildlands, offer pesticide- and pollution-free wild edibles that are often free of cost for the adventurous gatherer. Done properly, foraging is also sustainable. It doesn't get more locally grown than harvesting the plants that grow naturally in your "backyard." Getting outside to harvest wild plants is a great way to enjoy the outdoors and adds a new element of discovery to your wildland forays.

If foraging has made its way into your wilderness itinerary, use caution. In the wild, it's easy to mistake one plant for another. Before you head out to harvest, be sure you know how to properly identify the food and medicines you seek. For the beginning forager or wildcrafter, learn from an experienced teacher. Check with your local plant society, herbalists or other foragers to find out about plant walks, wildcrafting excursions and classes or outings focused on edible wild plants.

Responsible harvesting ensures our edible wild plant populations will be thriving for years to come.

WHEN FORAGING OR WILDCRAFTING IN NEW MEXICO'S WILDLANDS:

- Respect private property. Gain permission from property owners before accessing or harvesting.
- Know the regulations. If gathering from public lands, contact your local management office for information about permits and other regulations that may apply to the plant(s) you plan to harvest.
- Leave more than you take. Don't overharvest. Plants need seeds, spores and rootstocks for populations to perpetuate year after year. Wildlife rely upon many of these food sources as well.
- Use sound wilderness skills. Finding wild edibles often involves off-trail travel.
- Be prepared and bring the equipment you'll need to orient yourself and stay safe in the outdoors.
- Give thanks for the bounty provided by New Mexico's wild places! 🌲

LOOK FOR THESE WILD EDIBLES IN NEW MEXICO'S WILDLANDS:

Shoots: spring fireweed; wild asparagus

Bulbs: wild onion

Fruits: prickly pear; cholla buds

Greens: nettle leaves; watercress; lamb's quarters

Nuts: piñon

Fungi: boletus edulis; chanterelles

Berries: raspberry; mountain huckleberry



raspberry, By Rasbak, Wikimedia Commons



wild onion, Gary A. Monroe, Wikimedia Commons



fireweed, Dave Powell, USDA Forest Service



piñon nuts, Wikimedia Commons



boletus edulis, Wikimedia Commons



prickly pear, Chris Guy, USDA Agricultural Research Service



nettle, Wikimedia Commons

SPOTLIGHT "We lived in New Mexico for 21 years, and I love many parts of it. But when I think of a place I want to return to with my family, I think of Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. We camp at the Wild and Scenic Rivers campground and as is so often in New Mexico, the campground can be populated but not crowded. We last camped with our kids, Ben, 10 at the time, and Anna, 5. The campground sits on flat high ground raised up like the palm of an open hand. After we set up the tent we took a long hike with switchbacks, down, down to the confluence through shady places, little microhabitats with interesting vegetation, exciting cliff faces and amazing views. A strip of coolness and green was waiting for us at the bottom. When we got down there, our little girl took off her shoes and played and played in the running water. Then she hiked all the way back up — the longest hike she'd ever taken — without complaining once. Hoping for another visit before too very long!" — Eva Thaddeus, New York



Ute Mountain

At 10,093 feet, Ute Mountain is the highest point in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. The rugged volcanic mountain juts dramatically nearly 3,000 feet up from the sage flats and grasslands at its base just south of the Colorado border. The striking rise offers a remarkable contrast to the nearby gorge cutting along its western flank.

Ute and the surrounding volcanic cones are relics of an age when the Rio Grande Rift valley spread and opened massive lava flows across the plateau.

The Ute Mountain area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and wilderness-style recreation. The craggy landscape, free of designated trails, provides fabulous primitive recreational opportunities and some of the best stargazing skies in the nation.

Sharp elevation gain along the forested slopes of the mountain creates a great diversity of wildlife habitat. The steep slopes of Ute Mountain are covered in piñon at the base just above grassy meadows of blue grama, western wheatgrass and Indian ricegrass.

The climb up the mountain brings you into pockets of ponderosa, aspen, white pine and Douglas fir in the higher elevations where the trees thin and the sky opens to a one-of-a-kind vista. Beware of rattlesnakes and prickly vegetation. Be sure to bring plenty of water.

The starting point for the hike is about 45 miles from Taos Plaza. To get there, follow US 64 and then Highway 522 north through the village of Questa and just over the state line into Colorado. Turn left on County Road B toward the village of Jaroso, Colorado. Then turn south and follow the signs into the Ute Mountain area. 🏔️



Ute Mountain rises almost 3,000 feet above the surrounding landscape.

WILD GUIDE



Wilderness adventurers and novices alike will find something to love in "Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness," a new book out in March from the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

An unrivaled resource for New Mexico's special wild places, the beautiful publication offers a lifetime of inspiration for hikes, weekend camping trips, desert wanderings and backpacks. It also is packed full of history, color maps and stunning images from some of New Mexico's best photographers.

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

Order your copy now at www.nmwild.org or look for it soon in stores. The book sells for \$19.95.

Part hiking guide and part reference book, "Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness" can help you discover something you didn't already know and motivate you to learn more about the Wilderness Alliance and becoming a part of protecting our best public lands. The book replaces the Wilderness Alliance's annual publication and is an update of the out-of-print "New Mexico Wilderness Areas: The Complete Guide" by Bob Julyan.

GET YOUR WILD GUIDE TO FIND OUT WHERE THESE SPECIAL PLACES ARE AND UNLOCK THEIR SECRETS:

- "These are do-it-yourself wildlands — there are no designated trails, but simply following an arroyo or a ridge is sure to lead to something interesting."
- "From the top (of this peak) in the wilderness, you can see mountains and mesas stretching for miles in all directions, every view untarnished by roads or other human intrusions."
- "The more abundant moisture here results in more diverse recreational opportunities than elsewhere in the state."
- "This Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), designated to protect caves containing fossil resources that offer a glimpse into animals found in New Mexico in the recent past."
- "This region has New Mexico's greatest wilderness array, containing not only the state's first and third largest wildernesses but also its greatest ecological diversity."

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is proud to announce a partnership of epic proportions!

"BEER FOR A BETTER BURQUE" PARTNERSHIP

Benefitting



What's better than a cold beer after a long hike in the wilderness? Not a damn thing, that's what! Because we believe that life without wilderness would be like life without beer! Is it really possible to save the world by drinking a beer? We think so! Buying a Tractor growler or pint helps us protect New Mexico's threatened and disappearing wild places.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is a statewide, grassroots membership organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued respect of New Mexico's wild lands. To join or learn more about our outings, service projects or campaigns visit www.nmwild.org.

And remember....tractors don't belong in Wilderness...but growlers sure do!



Tractor Brewing Company is excited to jump into year two of our non-profit giving program: Beer for a Better Burque. We have chosen four diverse and incredible organizations to receive the benefits of BBB, in order to maximize the amount of support we can supply to causes we care about. This growler is one of the ways we are making that happen. Every time you fill this growler, a non-profit partner gets a \$1 donation for their operating and programming needs. Thank you for helping us make a difference.



TRACTOR BREWING COMPANY
1800 4TH ST NW
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102
WWW.GETPLOWED.COM



SABINOSO WILDERNESS ACCESS



The rugged landscape of the Sabinoso Wilderness was designated by Congress in 2009 thanks to Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, both New Mexico Democrats. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance was elated to see this gem added to the National Wilderness Preservation System after years of advocacy. The area remains the only designated Wilderness in the northeastern plains of New Mexico and one of only a handful of Wilderness areas managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in our state.

Since designation, however, the Sabinoso Wilderness has been the only wilderness in the country that did not have public access as it was “landlocked” by private land ownership. The scenic mesas and canyons, including the Canadian River gorge, will finally become accessible in the next year.

The Wilderness Land Trust (WLT) recently announced a major milestone in the effort to create public access to the 16,030-acre Sabinoso Wilderness. Thanks to a contribution from the Wyss Foundation, The Wilderness Land Trust has purchased the Rimrock Rose Ranch, a 4,176-acre property adjacent to the Sabinoso Wilderness that includes the remote and beautiful Canyon Largo. The Wilderness Land Trust will now work to transfer the Rimrock Rose to public ownership by donating it to the BLM. This will finally enable public access and increase the size of the Wilderness by 25 percent!

In the meantime, the Wilderness Alliance will be assisting the WLT and BLM to prepare the land for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System by organizing volunteer service projects and field trips beginning this spring. Contact tisha@nmwild.org if you'd like to sign up to help us remove fencing and remnants of the ranching operation. Come join us and be one of the first to see this beautiful Wilderness area. 🌲



From left to right: The Sabinoso Wilderness will be open for public access within the next year; Canyon Largo in the Rimrock Rose Ranch addition is soon to be part of the Sabinoso Wilderness; Board member Sam DesGeorges is welcomed to the Rimrock Rose Ranch addition by an ancient juniper. DesGeorges worked on protection of the Sabinoso Wilderness when he served as field manager of the BLM Taos Office. Photos: Mark Allison

SMART WATER DEVELOPMENT FOR SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO



By Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M.

In the Southwest, water is the lifeblood of our economy and culture. Access to adequate clean and affordable water means that our cities can bustle with activity, our

farmers can grow local food and our rivers can sustain the cottonwoods and wildlife we all know and love.

In exchange for developing water downstream in the Colorado River watershed, the Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004 (AWSA) gave the state of New Mexico money to fund water supply improvement projects. This money could either partially fund a major dam, reservoir and delivery project on the upper Gila River or instead pay for other types of water projects in the state's Southwest Planning Region — Catron, Luna, Hidalgo and Grant counties.

The U.S. Department of the Interior and the state of New Mexico recently signed an agreement that set out a framework for a multi-year environmental and cost evaluation of a Gila River diversion project and alternative proposals for water development on the upper region of the Gila. The question on the table is whether a diversion project should even be in the cards.

Proponents of a diversion project have argued that New Mexico needs to take any chance that comes its way to develop water, regardless of context, costs or value.

Based on analysis to date, however, it is hard to imagine a dam or diversion of the Gila River that is not irresponsibly expensive as well as destructive to other economic and resource values.

Initial cost estimates put the price tag for a full diver-

sion project on the Gila between \$800 million and \$1.18 billion. And with only around 8 percent to 13 percent of the total cost coming from the federal AWSA funding, some of which has already been spent just to study the proposal, New Mexico taxpayers would be on the hook for the rest.

On top of that, water users in southwest New Mexico — residents of Silver City, Deming and other communities as well as farmers and ranchers in the four counties — would likely see their water bills go up drastically in order to pay for expensive water coming from the diversion project.

We must also carefully consider what could be lost. The upper Gila is the last free-flowing river in the American Southwest. It is home to many species of fish and birds that rely on its natural hydrology. It is dominated by an amazing gallery forest of native cottonwoods and white-trunked Arizona sycamores towering over riparian willows because of the river's natural flooding regime.

Recreation tourism, which brings significant dollars to local businesses in the region, depends on a healthy Gila River. And local communities, farmers and ranchers all depend on the greater Gila-San Francisco watershed to recharge their aquifers and groundwater supplies.

I believe that there are smarter and more responsible ways to spend taxpayer dollars than to dewater the Gila River. We should use the AWSA money to fund proven water efficiency and infrastructure measures. In recent years, state Sen. Howie Morales, who represents Grant and Catron counties, has introduced legislation that would direct AWSA funds toward 13 high-priority water projects in all four counties. Each of these projects has

broad support and would yield real results for a fraction of the cost of a billion dollar dam.

Watershed restoration, regional water supply projects and improvements to irrigation infrastructure will do far more to sustain future water needs in southwest New Mexico than a Gila diversion project ever could.

At a time when reduced revenue streams from low oil and gas prices are forcing our state into difficult budget decisions, we need to be deliberate in our assessment of whether dewatering the Gila River is a wise use of taxpayer dollars. And when better, data-driven alternatives exist, it's wasteful to throw away millions of dollars studying a diversion project when we could be spending those millions on real projects that will yield real water at an affordable price.

New Mexico's taxpayers deserve responsible, cost effective, science-based solutions if we are to manage both our limited water supplies and constrained budgets. Damming or diverting the Gila River simply does not meet that standard. 🌲



Gila River, near the proposed diversion site. Photo: Mark Allison

SPOTLIGHT “Whether it is soaking in a hot spring after hiking the canyons and mesas of the Gila; seeing the effects of wind, water and time in the Bisti; walking the forests and high peaks of the Pecos; or seeing the dynamic geology of El Malpais, New Mexico has a wonderful diversity of wild landscapes providing countless opportunities for exploration and enjoyment fitting for the Land of Enchantment.” — Zack Bumgarner, North Carolina

THANK YOU TO ALBUQUERQUE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Thank you to the Albuquerque Community Foundation for funding our work to organize volunteer service projects in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. We truly appreciate your commitment to support one of the greatest assets of our community. 🌲



UNM Wilderness Alliance and UNM Mountaineering Club join in to pilot test graffiti removal methods in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. Photos: Tisha Broska

THANK YOU REI FOR FUNDING VALLES CALDERA WORK



New Mexico Wilderness Alliance volunteers rallied to remove miles of fencing in the Valles Caldera National Preserve in 2015, helping to open up the landscape for the benefit of wildlife and recreational activities. Removing old fence that was no longer needed for livestock — along with converting traditional barbed wire to “wildlife friendly” fences with strands

of smooth wire — will reduce wildlife injuries, particularly to elk.

Sixty-five Wilderness Alliance volunteers contributed 1,058 hours to remove 12.7 miles of fence in the preserve. Among the volunteers were 27 youth of college age or younger. The Wilderness Alliance partnered with the Boy Scouts of America, who camped out with us in September. In addition, members of the UNM Wilderness Alliance chapter helped remove fence on National Public Lands Day, the nation’s largest, single-day volunteer effort for public lands, traditionally held on the last Saturday in September. 🌲



Clockwise from top left: Photo: Raymond Watt; Photo: Tisha Broska; Photo: Tisha Broska

PUBLIC LANDS UPDATE

WHAT STANDS TO BE LOST

Land transfer is impractical economically. What’s at stake?

From 2001-2013, counties with at least 30% protected national land saw

job growth 4X faster than counties with no protected land.

New Mexicans recognize this — According to a 2013 poll:

84% of New Mexicans believe that public lands are essential to the New Mexico economy.

NM OUTDOOR RECREATION GENERATES:



\$6.1 billion in consumer spending



\$1.7 billion in wages and salaries



68,000 jobs



Hundreds attend the 2016 public lands rally in Santa Fe. Photo: Mark Allison

SPOTLIGHT “The vast wild deserts, rivers and mountains so close to Albuquerque got my attention while I was in town for the 50th Wilderness conference in 2014. I was thrilled by hiking in the Sandia Mountains, mesmerized by the cottonwoods peaking in yellow along the Rio Grande, and awed by the sandhill cranes landing for the winter in the Bosque Del Apache. I was inspired by everyone working to protect these lands. I’ll be back!” — Teri Shore, California

Aldo Leopold Charter School



Before attending Aldo Leopold Charter School (ALCS), the concept of the wild was a distant and unattainable muse. I believed that my backyard, the Gila, was a mystery that I would never comprehend. At 13 years old, I never expected that the first week of high school would mean strapping on a backpack and hiking 10 miles into the heart of the Gila Wilderness, but at ALCS, that is the norm. It was this experience that showed me the meaning of experiential education and drove my passion for ecological sustainability. I graduated from ALCS with the desire and knowledge to make a difference. Fast forward 10 years, and I am still awestruck by the beauty of the wild and am leading groups of students towards that same passion. — Madeline Alfero, 2010

The Gila Wilderness is probably the best teacher I've ever had. That's saying a lot, because I've been privileged with some great mentors in my life. Socially, the wilderness taught me to be much more comfortable in my own skin than I'd ever been before. Even (or especially!) teenagers have to drop pretensions after a couple of days in the wild. Morally, the wilderness reinforced my beliefs in favor of protecting our Earth. Knowing viscerally what we stand to lose inspires vigorous action much more effectively than watching a slideshow presentation. The wilderness is an invaluable educational tool. Use it! — Avery Jepson-Browne, 2009

Aldo Leopold Charter School continues to have a profound effect on both of our lives. The two of us were part of the first group of students at ALCS, and now we are the first alumni to become part of the staff. This year we accomplished something that had never been done: Alumni led a group of eight students on their first backpacking trip. We had the opportunity to impart our knowledge to a younger generation and to show them the path toward protecting wild places.

Aldo Leopold Charter School in Silver City is a tuition-free middle and high school that provides an engaging and challenging educational program emphasizing direct experience, inquiry learning, stimulation of the creative process and stewardship of our community and natural environment. ALCS graduates use the skills, perspectives and information they've gained at school to enhance their own lives and to advance social, economic and environmental sustainability. At ALCS, we believe that community, experiences and wild places are our greatest teachers. 🐾



Above, top, Madeline Alfero and Avery Jepson-Browne pose with seven of the 10th- and 11th-graders they took backpacking along the West Fork of the Gila River in the fall. Bottom, Aldo Leopold Charter School 10th- and 11th-graders hike through wildflowers in the Gila Wilderness. Photos: Maddy Alfero

YOUTH WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE By Rachel Fristedt

United World College

"Big booty, big booty, big booty, oh yeah, big booty."

"Big Booty, number 3."

"Number 3, number 8."

Twelve of us, standing in a circle, chanted the newly learned trail game as we waited for our pot of water to boil. It was the second weekend in October and snow started falling just as we arrived to camp on the top of Hermit's Peak. The unexpected precipitation invoked delight for students from Mexico and Singapore, who had never seen snow falling before. However, it also called for the group to rally around the challenging conditions. The cold weather forced us to keep our bodies moving and our minds off the chilly temperatures. Thus the trail game "Big Booty," a clapping and chanting game that challenges players to keep rhythm and avoid getting tongue-tied. A group of 16- to 19-year-olds would not normally spend hours playing this game back on campus where Netflix, smart phones and close friends are always nearby. But that night on Hermit's Peak we bonded despite the cold as we tried to advance in the game of Big Booty.

The Hermit's Peak experience was a quintessential wilderness outing for United World College USA (UWC-USA). UWC-USA is a two-year residential school with students representing over 70 countries with diverse life experiences. While the rigorous academic schedule keeps the students busy, the Wilderness Program offers a welcome respite from the course load. The goals of the program are to introduce students to the natural world, to develop community and to teach leadership skills. Wilderness is the perfect backdrop for students to push their comfort zones and learn about themselves and their classmates. Within their first two weeks on campus students participate in a three-day backpacking trip. Friendships and bonds are created as they work together to carry their packs (a first for many), cook meals and learn to be comfortable in a new environment. These trips are peer-led with the oversight of a trained outdoor educator. Student leaders complete a 12-day leadership backpacking course in which they learn technical skills such as navigation, backcountry cooking and bear precautions as well as group facilitation, risk management and decision-making. Most of our student leaders were novice backpackers when they arrived on campus and can empathize with the trepidation and nervousness of their classmates as they experience a wilderness trip for the first time.

Whether from a 12-day expedition or an overnight hike, the lessons learned on a wilderness trip are transferable to life experiences, both back at the UWC-USA campus and beyond. Most UWC-USA graduates leave New Mexico to live all around the world; however, they continue to feel a deep sense of connection to the wilderness areas they visited during their time here. Through their wilderness experiences they become environmental stewards, learn how to thrive in adverse conditions and develop connections with people from diverse backgrounds. 🐾



Top, United World College students hike in Carson National Forest. Bottom, United World College second year wilderness leaders teach navigation to their classmates. Photos: Anneli Xie



A Love Letter to Solo Backpacking, Wilderness and Jenny

The descent into the canyon is steep and rocky. I climb down in places and must jump from boulder to boulder in others. After a few miles, I stop and drop my pack to have lunch near an ancient cottonwood on the bank of a large pool created by a series of cascading slickrock pourovers. Today, only a trickle of water drips from the lip. Winter lingers where the sun doesn't reach and the pond is surprisingly still frozen solid. Rocks are strewn about randomly on the surface of the ice, having stopped, for a time, after a slide starting far above the canyon floor.

A wilderness Zen garden, the rocks on the ice temporarily interrupted, suspended from what will be their final resting spot deep at the bottom of the pool, not to be seen again by human eyes for 1,000 years or more. Or ever. Yet I am here now to witness and participate in this gift; I smile to myself at the recognition that this beauty is the more special because it is so unexpected, so rare and experienced by so few. I wonder at the series of choices and chances in my life that put me here at this moment. I am aware, too, that a simple distraction may have caused me to pass it by unnoticed, unappreciated.

That this phenomenon will undoubtedly repeat itself again and again, year after year, as it has for eons, whether it is observed by me or not, is humbling. And comforting. And pleasing. I start down again. With each step I take, I know that I will remember and that it is now a part of me.

AND IN ALL THIS, I FEEL YOU.

The first night, there is not another soul in the whole of the canyon. I set up camp on the opposite side of the creek from a natural red rock arch, a thousand feet above. Its span frames a window of blue sky beyond it and then, at night, stars. This place has one of the darkest skies in all of the lower 48. No towns to pollute the blackness and dilute the intensity of the stars. And tonight, no moon either. The stars' number and clarity here never fails to astound me.

The canyon is completely devoid of sound this night. Not a bird, not the rustle of a leaf, nothing. It is so rare to experience silence this complete. Only the soft thumping of my own heartbeat in my ear. I awake in the night to see the handle of the Big Dipper, centered perfectly, extending down into the arch. I watch as shooting stars streak by and a few satellites pass, the only observable reminder of a world beyond the canyon, and I cinch my sleeping bag tighter against the chill and drift back to sleep.

AND IN ALL THIS, I SEE YOU.

After a breakfast of coffee and pancakes, I get an early start on the trail, eager to fall into the familiar rhythm and routine and to stretch my legs on this relatively flat section, after the knee- and ankle-jarring descent of yesterday. The beauty of the desert can be subtle. Not so of this canyon, its colors gaudy and proud. The towering canyon walls on either side of me are a deep red, rich with the patina of desert varnish. The sky is a brilliant, piercing blue. The junipers and sage are a vibrant and shimmering green.

My company today is the canyon wren and three soaring ravens. Some native peoples view the raven as a bearer of messages from the cosmos, beyond time and space. Others have ascribed them with a more menacing meaning. I always take their presence as a good omen and welcome them. I miss my constant trail companion of 10 years, my sweet dog, though I sense she is with me now, too. We spent much time together in this part of the world.

Ten miles by two o'clock and I nap on a rocky ledge. The sun is warm and the breeze is cool on my bare skin. I use the binoculars to spot Anasazi ruins in the seemingly unreachable crevices high above. I passed an intact kiva yesterday and today see mostly granaries. I close my eyes and can hear in the wind the voices of playing children from days long since gone.

I open and read your card this evening on a sandy bench overlooking the confluence of streams spilling from the intersection of two major canyons. I read and re-read it, turning the words over in my mind, tracing the writing with my eyes, imagining the thought and care and love that went into it. My heart races.

I awake this last morning, again with the canyon to myself. I leisurely break camp, knowing that there are only a few miles left to where I started the loop. I say my goodbyes and give my thanks and start off. Up and up the canyon wall, following no real trail but a way marked by rock cairns. I must stop from time to time to carefully search the cliff above me for the next marker before proceeding.

A real scramble — steep slickrock friction pitches and then hand over hand in places, the weight of my pack wanting to pull me backwards. Just before the rim, I climb a 15-foot vertical section. I should remove my pack and haul it up after me by rope, but for the challenge, I don't. I doubt I look graceful and am glad there is no audience, but I muscle my way up and it feels good.

AND IN ALL THIS, I SENSE YOU.

On the long drive back, I pass by spots that I've previously packed, camped and hiked and remember fondly the things that I have seen and done. I usually leave the camera at home and though some of the sharp details of past trips have been dulled by time, I remember the feelings, the impressions, the sounds and the smells. The knowledge that I won't have photographs helps me focus only on the moment. I try to open my heart to absorb it so it becomes part of me. There is no need, and no way, for me to try to control or capture it. So I just am.

Your note gone, your exact words may become cloudy to me years from now. But I walk away full of you, grateful that I was privileged enough to have received them, to have experienced them. And humbled with the knowledge that even when I can't see them, like the rocks falling on the ice, they will always be there.

AND IN ALL THIS, I LOVE YOU. 🐾



Photo: Doug Campbell



Photo: Mark Allison

SPOTLIGHT "I am a landscape painter and find the New Mexico landscape breathtaking. In addition, I feel a great urgency to support causes that protect our remaining wildlands. Simply put, we live in relationship with all other species and must respect their habitats as if they were our own ... because they are! Our collective soul depends on sound stewardship." — Jennifer Fleisher, New Jersey



Foreman in Noatak National Preserve Wilderness Area, Alaska. Photo: Nancy Morton

Talking to Wild Things

Wilderness recreation stands out from all other outdoor recreation in that you have to take it on its own terms. That means without mechanical aids — no cozy travel trailer, no wheels This is the dare of Wilderness. It comes in many hues. Some of those hues are big waves, sweepers, steep rock faces, staying warm, staying dry, rattlesnakes, lightning strikes, howling wind, rising stream crossings These are the kinds of challenges most folks would think of — along with carrying everything you need on your back or in your canoe.

I know all these risks. I have met them. They have left their marks on me. In all of them we find wildness. But it may be a tougher challenge to go slow, quiet and deep to find the wildness in a Wild Neighborhood. When I am a careful wayfarer in a Wild Neighborhood I may be in solitude from other ground apes, but I am far from alone.

The hard challenge here is to overcome ourselves as blundering oafs through willful self-restraint and come into a new neighborhood with great humility, gentleness and friendliness. And to be welcome, you need to know your neighbors — by name.

And so, you would think me mad, were you hidden along my path in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness area. I talk as I walk.

“Hey, Kingbird. Good catch. You got that one.”

“Well, hello, Baby Asters. You sure are looking pretty today.”

“I see you up there, Rock Squirrel. Be careful or a hawk will snatch you up.”

“Run, Whiptail, run!”

“Why, hello. I don’t think we’ve met before. I’m sorry not to know your name. I’ll learn it for next time we meet.”

Aldo Leopold wrote that we needed to become plain members and citizens of the land community. To me, that means you need to know who lives in the Wild Neighborhood you are passing through.

Seeing — knowing — Wilderness Areas as Wild Neighborhoods dwelt in by sundry other Earthlings is a way to build a greathearted love for wild things. For at the core of true ethics is the call to love your neighbor as yourself.

So, go quiet, go deep, go with love into Wild Neighborhoods and you will not only find true wildness, but you will build the fondness you need to fight for wild things.

And you will learn that life is good. 🐿



Tansyaster in the Sandia Wilderness foothills. Photo: Dave Foreman

Join the Father’s Day Memory and Appreciation Wildflower Walk in the Sandia Foothills Open Space

Get your first-hand glimpse of spring wildflowers and walk in honor of dads, brothers and uncles past or present this Father’s Day. Naturalist Larry Littlefield, a wildflower author and expert, will lead this hike at a slow pace to appreciate sightings of birds, bees and wildflowers.

- **WHEN:** 8:45-11 a.m. Sunday, June 19
- **WHERE:** Meet at the far east parking lot for the Pino Trail at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area. Carpool if possible — the parking lot is small.
- **DIFFICULTY:** Easy 1.5-mile loop hike on mostly level terrain
- **REGISTRATION:** www.nmwild.org
- **COST:** A \$15 donation to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is requested at time of registration. There is a \$2 entrance fee payable at the picnic area.

Limited to the first 20 registrants. Bring water, sunscreen and a hat.



New Mexico

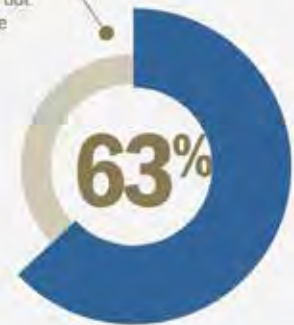


Identify Lack of Resources for National Public Lands Maintenance as a Serious Problem

Tied with Arizona for greatest proportion of the electorate who says “lack of resources to properly maintain and take care of national parks, forests and other public lands” is a serious problem

Oppose State Takeover of Public Lands

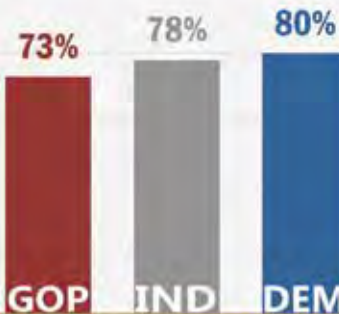
“Some Members of Congress have proposed giving New Mexico state government control over national public lands, such as national forests, national monuments, and national wildlife refuges in its borders. The state government would decide the future management of the lands, but state taxpayers would pay all costs, including the cost of maintenance and preventing and fighting wildfires.”



79% support presidential authority for National Monument designation

80% support treating wildfires as natural disasters in budgeting;

75% support continuing investment in LWCF



Conservation is Important in Candidate Selection



83% say “pollution of rivers, lakes and streams” is a serious problem in the state — highest of any in the region

Colorado College, State of the Rockies Project, Conservation in the West Poll, <https://www.colorado-college.edu/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/>



Snowshoes into the White and Wild

I strapped on my snowshoes, shouldered my pack and plowed my way through fresh, powdery snow and into the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness northeast of Taos. On my left, Columbine Creek snaked its way under the snow and a thick cover of ice. Occasionally, the creek made its way to the surface to crash through the frigid air. Where it was exposed, the water was black and thick and it gurgled and bubbled and forced the ice to groan and squeak. To my right, a mountain lion had recently left a trail through the powder and up into the spruce and the aspens and ponderosa and to a cliff hanging above my route.

Magic.

I remember the day I stopped skiing. I was about 22 years old. I was standing on the upper reaches of the Hallelujah Trail at Copper Mountain in Colorado and I looked down the mountains and thought: "This sucks!" After growing up in Colorado and learning to ski at a very young age, I'd come to the realization that I hated downhill skiing. And that was my very last run.

But you can't live in northern New Mexico and just hibernate for the four to five months of winter we have up here. So I took to snowshoeing as my outdoor winter activity. I became an obsessed snowshoer. I tend to head up

the trails I know so well from my summer hiking: Serpent Lake into the Pecos, Columbine Creek and Gold Hill into the Columbine-Hondo, Lost Lake into Wheeler or along Diablo Creek in the Cruces Basin Wilderness.

Snowshoeing is easy to learn. Some wit once said that snowshoeing is a 12-step program ... you take 12 steps and you know how to snowshoe. Pretty true overall; this isn't rocket science. But it is winter out there and that isn't anything to mess with. One of the things I hate about downhill skiing is all the people, so a trek into the wilderness is more my style. But there are very few people back in our wildlands and little help if you get into trouble. So, there are a few things to be aware of before heading into the white and wild on your snowshoes.

You already know that travelling in the snow can be complicated. Post-holing up a slope or even across a field just isn't fun. Snowshoes allow you to "float" on top of the snow by spreading your weight over more surface area. You'll need to get snowshoes large enough to accommodate your weight. Typically, they range between 20 and 30 inches long; the larger the person, the larger the snowshoe. Be sure to take the weight of your pack into account as well when choosing your snowshoes. You'll also need to grab your trekking poles, a big help when you fall down.

The other thing you'll have to take into account are the bindings on your snowshoes. If you're planning on trekking through steep terrain, you will want bindings that allow your heel to move up and down like a normal walking motion. While fixed heels make it easier to pull your snowshoe up and out of the snow, the loose heels allow for a more natural climbing motion when going uphill.

You don't want snow getting into your boots, melting and then refreezing. Cold feet make for a miserable experience. A good pair of gaiters solves this problem. Gaiters are short leggings that zip up along your calf and clip over your boots.

In the pack I take on my snowshoe trips I bring an entire extra set of clothing, a backup pair of gloves, an emergency warming blanket, a flashlight, a first aid kit, a lighter, some dry sticks and paper, water and extra food — more food than I would take in the summer. My intention is not to spend the night out there, I'm not a winter camper. But if I get into trouble I want to know I can make do until I get help. And be sure to tell someone where you're going and when you plan to get back.

New Mexico's wilderness areas are pure magic covered in winter snow. The wildlife you can see differs from that in the summer. The low, slanted rays of the sun create colors you won't see at other times of year. Light glints through hoar frost, the ice settles on the creek. The elk move across the meadow. There is a special silence and an unrivaled clarity to be found in the wild in winter. Enjoy it.

Jim O'Donnell is a freelance writer and photographer based in Taos. He is also a former New Mexico Wilderness Alliance staffer. Learn more at www.aroundtheworldineightyyears.com. Editor's note: The 44,698-acre Columbine-Hondo Wilderness is New Mexico's newest Wilderness area. It was designated on Dec. 19, 2014.



Snowshoeing is easy to learn for both children and adults alike. Photo: Jim O'Donnell

GO WEST, ENTREPRENEUR

The American West has spent the past four decades outpacing the rest of the U.S. in several important economic measures. Embracing the new economy, which is shifting toward service industries, not to mention the unparalleled quality of life offered by the region's bounty of protected public lands, make the West the best place for America's most innovative people and companies.

Changing and growing economy

The rise of the West can be attributed in part to the region's success in developing and attracting a diverse services economy.

CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST BY INDUSTRY, 2001 TO 2010

Health care and social assistance	786,810
Real estate and rental and leasing	500,815
Finance and insurance	391,851
Government and government enterprises	372,458
Professional and technical services	359,646
Educational services	241,049
Accommodation and food services	234,298
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	143,751
Other services, except public administration	141,910
Administrative and waste services	105,925
Mining, oil and gas	76,135
Transportation and warehousing	20,234
Forestry, fishing, related activities, and other utilities	16,726
Wholesale trade	7,428
Wholesale trade	-2,107
Wood products manufacturing	-7,890
Retail trade	-14,161
Management of companies and enterprises	-45,889
Farm employment	-51,825
Information	-184,679
Construction	-367,436
Manufacturing	-766,738

HIGH-WAGE SERVICES, AVERAGE EARNINGS PER JOB, 2010

Not only are services jobs growing, many of them pay well

Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$97,808
Information	\$96,216
Utilities	\$95,565
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$84,061
Finance and Insurance	\$79,906
Wholesale Trade	\$65,500

Attracting talent through attractive surroundings

As the Western economy shifts from reliance on extracting and processing natural materials businesses are no longer necessarily bound by geography. Economists say entrepreneurs are increasingly choosing to locate in Western states thanks in part to the prevalence and accessibility of public lands, replete with wild rivers, forests, and mountains and outstanding recreational opportunities; in other words — quality of life — which offers a competitive advantage in attracting top talent.

West is best—for your wallet, too

The more protected public lands, the higher per-capita income becomes. On average, western non-metro counties have a per capita income that is **\$436 higher** for every 10,000 acres of federal protected lands within their boundaries.

AVERAGE INCREASE IN PER CAPITA INCOME FROM PROTECTED PUBLIC ACREAGE, NON-METRO WEST, 2010

0 acres	\$0
50,000 acres	\$2,180
100,000 acres	\$4,360
150,000 acres	\$6,540

PERCENT CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT, WESTERN NON-METRO COUNTIES, 1970-2010

More than 30% Protected	345%
More than 20% Protected	297%
Less than 10% Protected	108%
0% Protected	83%

HEADWATERS ECONOMICS
<http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands/>

Credit: Headwaters Economics



Chef Cristina Maggiora and Travel Bug Owner, Greg Ohlsen Photo: Ellen Stelling

COMMUNITY PARTNERS By Alicia Johnson, Staff

Travel Bug Gives Weighty Support to Wilderness

The penny jar at the independent, locally owned travel specialty store in Santa Fe is front and center on the checkout counter. There's weighty support for Wilderness in that jar. After customers order an espresso and sandwich and lay down a new travel guide, a new map of Belize, new quick-dry undies for an upcoming trip and dashing new sunglasses, the penny jar beckons: "Support New Mexico Wilderness Alliance!"

Travel Bug owner and longtime Wilderness Alliance member Greg Ohlsen serves travelers year-round by offering an all-in-one traveler's haven with free Wi-Fi, local maps and guides, a wide array of international guides and maps, travel accessories, luggage, globes, flags, travel clothing and a full espresso bar and cafe. Free parking, too!

Ohlsen hosts numerous wilderness speakers at the store in collaboration with the Wilderness Alliance. He believes in giving back locally. When asked why the penny jar, in his usual tongue-in-cheek manner he answered, "We believe in rounding pennies up and out of existence as they are forced upon us. We're thinking about nickels next."

Travel Bug will be carrying the new "Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness" published by the Wilderness Alliance this spring. He also is volunteering his time to create all the maps for the 2016 edition of the Sierra Club's "Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area."

Ohlsen, along with the staff and an entire section of the store, form a resource for local recreational information for exploring the nearby national forests, Wilderness areas and parks. They stock and print USGS maps on demand. A key entry point to New Mexico's beauty and natural history, this community partner encourages an appreciation for Wilderness in these arid Western lands.

If you are in Santa Fe, stop by to meet kindred travelers. And please drop your extra change in support of Wilderness! It all adds up to protect our wildest national lands in this amazing state. 🐾



Photo: Greg Ohlsen

TRAVEL BUG
travelbug@mapsofnewmexico.com | (505) 992-0418
839 Paseo de Peralta | Santa Fe, NM 87501
7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Monday–Saturday
and 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Sunday

If you are a business or organization and would like to know more about how to give back to Wilderness with a membership in the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, please go to www.nmwild.org.

UNM WILDERNESS ALLIANCE CHAPTER By Marie Westover

"There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other and the relation of people to the land," Aldo Leopold once proclaimed.

The weekend of April 16, students from the UNM Wilderness Alliance will mount an expedition to the Gila Wilderness that Leopold campaigned to create. As our country's first designated Wilderness area, the Gila Wilderness is a historically, culturally and ecologically significant part of New Mexico. New Mexico's largest Wilderness area, the Gila made history when in 1924 the area was the first to be recognized as an area excluding roads and denying use permits for exploitative activities such as logging and mining. With this recognition, the land became the first to be protected against the permanent presence of humans and artificial structures.

The Gila's cultural importance is perhaps best witnessed at the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. These sandstone dwellings were constructed more than 700 years ago by the Mogollon people who inhabited the caves and grew crops in the river valley for perhaps a generation before moving elsewhere.

The ecology of the Gila is tremendously diverse. With 872 square miles of undeveloped land, the ecosystem supports large predators that require such a refuge. Bobcats, cougars and, perhaps most

famously, endangered Mexican gray wolves roam the mountains and canyons. The rugged terrain includes spruce-fir forests on mountain peaks, elegant ponderosa pine forests and Chihuahuan desert ecotones.

Our short backpacking trip to the middle fork of the Gila River will be some UNMWA members' first true backcountry wilderness experience. We will teach, learn and practice Leave No Trace principles. We will pass through juniper scrub, piñon pine and river bottom woodlands en route to the river. For desert dwellers, the middle fork of the Gila River is a welcome sight, though modest in size. The walls of the canyon become steeper upriver, leading deeper into the wilderness, but downstream the river is threatened by potential diversion projects.

Our student members were born and raised in New Mexico or came as transplants from across the country. We hail from diverse departments and disciplines, and yet all of us are

drawn to the legacy of Leopold; it is our relation to the land that brings us together as a group. The Gila Wilderness is a legacy to be proud of and be a part of. It will be a rewarding trip for everyone! 🐾



UNM Wilderness Alliance chapter members show their support at the 2016 public lands rally in Santa Fe. From left to right, Marie Westover, Jacob Wolff, William Brewer. Photo: Tisha Broska



Photo: Sara Bergthold

Welcome Lois Manno

Living more than 30 years in New Mexico has given Lois Manno a great depth of appreciation for this state and its wild country. She is pleased to serve as the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance's membership coordinator, helping to promote wildlands protection statewide.

Lois brings with her a wealth of experience and expertise. She knows the Southwest and has a background in nonprofit administration with experience coordinating programs and membership

for groups including the Forest Stewards Guild, 1000 Friends of New Mexico and the National Parks Conservation Association.

She is a cave enthusiast and has volunteered as a project cover for Carlsbad Caverns National Park and other land management agencies for over 20 years. She is a fellow of the National Speleological Society and the Cave Research Foundation. She is also a graphic artist, editor and author of "Visions Underground – Carlsbad Caverns Through the Artist's Eye."

SPOTLIGHT "New Mexico has unparalleled wildlands that are much more valuable for their solitude, beauty, clean water and wildlife than for oil, gas and minerals. While I don't get to visit N.M. wildlands very often, I support the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance to make sure that New Mexicans and visitors can enjoy and benefit from the state's wild places forever." — John Hudson, Alaska

WOLVES BELONG!



The 2016 Mexican Wolf Conservation stamp features artwork by Jacob Tarazoff. With a passion for the wild and pursuit for adventure, Jacob is a 33 year old painter who works with a limited palette, primarily painting en plein aire (outside) and alla prima (wet into wet, one sitting).

“My current focus is on the idea of landscape, as a living memory. It is my aim to present an homage exalting the elemental natural processes that have shaped not only the earth, but also our own biological and sociocultural selves,” explained the artist.

The Mexican gray wolf is the most endangered wolf in the world, with a wild population of only 97 in the Southwest. All proceeds from

sales of the wolf stamp directly benefit activities to support Mexican wolf conservation and education projects.

This year’s stamp is the sixth in a limited-edition series.

The 2016 Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp is not a true postage stamp. The 4.5- by 5.5-inch full-color commemorative stamp is part of a series of framing-quality art prints offered to collectors.

The stamp is available for \$20 at www.nmwild.org. To purchase a wolf stamp, go to Shop, where you will find the entire collection of stamps. 🐾



Note the bumper sticker, hand-delivered by David Blagg. This was taken in the Exclusion Zone at Chernobyl, where wolves have made a remarkable recovery. Driver, Sergey Domashevsky; passengers, Igor Chijevsky and Victor Moroz. Photo: David Blagg

CEDAR MESA TREK

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 2ND

Dr. Andrew Gulliford and Peak and Canyons Wilderness Trekking will lead us on an adventure exploring the ancestral Puebloans landscape of Cedar Mesa, Utah. Limited to 10 guests, this trip promises to be a unique archeological and wilderness experience in the heart of Southeast Utah’s Canyon Country.



\$450 per person includes meals, guide service, and permits. Proceeds to benefit New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

All ages, medium to strenuous hiking levels.

Go to <http://nmwild.org/events-outings> to register or for more information.

Peaks and Canyons delivers first-rate, unique, custom, and full support wilderness treks within the Four Corners region. Dr. Andrew Gulliford is a professor of history and environmental studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango and author of “Outdoors in the Southwest: An Adventure Anthology.”

Dear Friends of Wilderness and Habitat Protection —

THANKYOU for reading our free publication. We hope this recreation edition inspires you and your friends and families.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance stands on more than twenty years’ experience in achieving protection for more than one million acres of national lands in this state.

And yet we still have another million acres of landscape-scale habitat to protect for the future. We humbly ask for your continued help.

Please consider giving to Wilderness protection with your tax-deductible donation to NMWilderness Alliance, and remember

- We do not receive government funding
- We remain laser-focused and independent in the face of any threat to Wilderness
- We work for you and your conservation ethics and values!

Please use the mail-in form below, or visit NMWild.org to give online and learn more about how you and your family and friends can join the inspiring community of people who support public land conservation in New Mexico.

Let There Be Wilderness Forever!

22-25

“What are your favorite ways to enjoy wilderness? Let us know!”

22. _____

23. _____

24. _____

25. _____

NM Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464 | Albuquerque, NM 87125

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance All New Mexico All The Time

YES! I will support Wilderness.

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 _____ Other

I would like to become a monthly donor for \$25 \$10 Other \$ _____ Per month.

Visa Mastercard Check (Please make checks payable to the NM Wilderness Alliance.)

Card # _____ Expiration _____

Signature _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

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Mail your tax-deductible donations to:
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464 Albuquerque, NM 87125
For questions regarding memorial gifts, bequests, or stock gifts, email info@nmwild.org

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Values Statement

More than two decades ago, our founders articulated a conservation ethic in the state of New Mexico aligned with our nation's landmark Wilderness Act of 1964. Dedicated to the rights and the value of citizen involvement, this organization began listening to and amplifying that citizen voice to protect our increasingly rare wild places within our public lands.

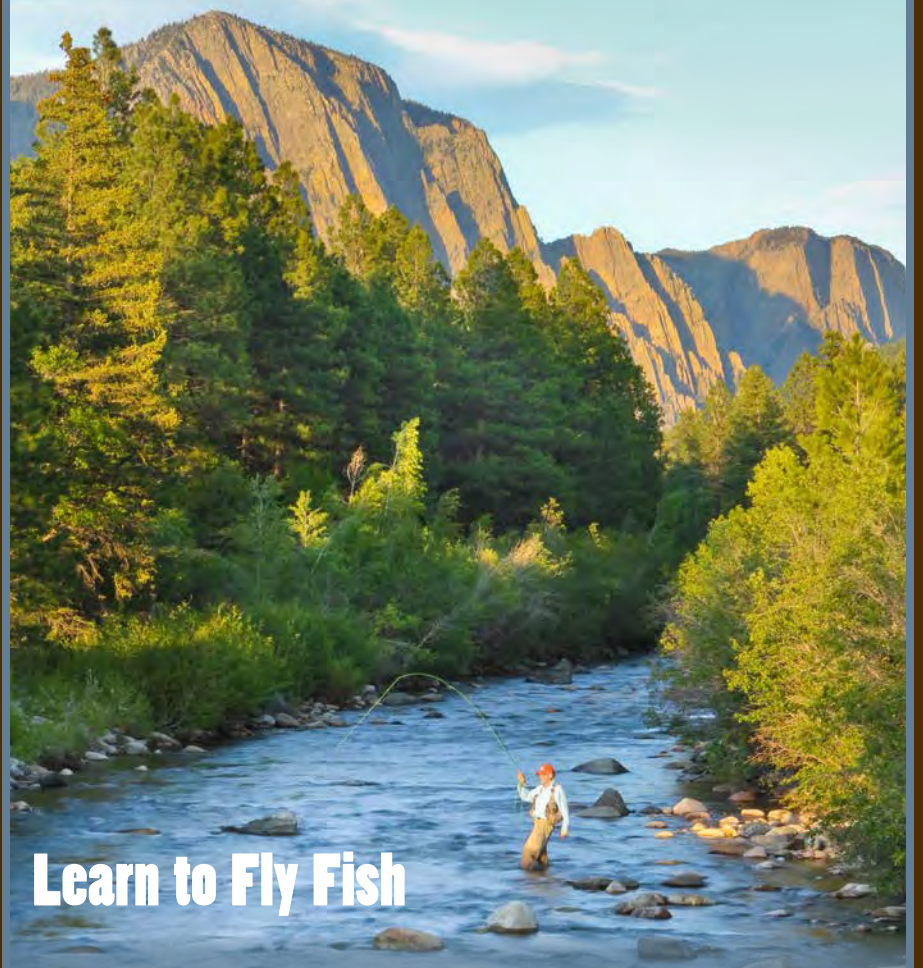
To this day we remain exclusively dedicated to protecting Wilderness. We ask citizens to join us in this effort to preserve what is ours as a nation, that which should never be diminished by the desires of commerce or thoughtless action. We accomplish this goal by pursuing our ends through the democratic process.

We each live but a short time and we cannot forget these lands that others kept open for us. It is for this experience of full life on Earth we rededicate ourselves every day, trusting Wilderness will remain widely consecrated by citizens as theirs to conserve.

Beyond our human intentions lies the evidence that Wilderness belongs. The landscapes, both majestic and subtle, give home and sustenance to this earth's unfathomable diversity. Within a human life span, it lives. And beyond a human life span it lives, moving to its own timepiece, if we only allow it.

Just as freedom is every American's birthright so too is Wilderness. We know they are inseparable. We hold this truth dearly as we preserve Wilderness from generation to generation for us, for all species and for its own sake.

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nmwild.org



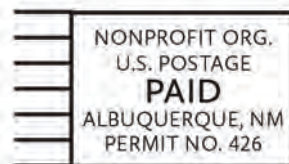
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New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
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Albuquerque, NM 87125
Not a member yet? Go to nmwild.org.



Ash-shi-sle-pah. Photo: Cottonwood Gulch