

ALBUQUERQUE WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Founded by Aldo Leopold in 1914 to protect and perpetuate our wildlife and natural resources

AWF Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2010

MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, February 11, 2010 — 7:30 pm
Manzano Mesa Center (map p2)

Guest Speaker: **Martin Martinez**, Albuquerque Open Space

Program: *At the Bosque... Bald Eagle Migration — A Study*

Aldo Leopold Forest — How it Came to Be



PHOTO: chamavalley.com

This month Martin Martinez brings us an evening filled with information about Albuquerque's treasured Bosque. As Forester with the city's Open Space Division, which manages the Bosque, Martin has a variety of roles to perform. Come learn about the myriad duties of an urban forester.

Wearing his "scientist hat," Martin has studied migration patterns of the majestic Bald Eagle within the Rio Grande Valley State Park, and will share with us the fascinating details and results.

Also, hear about the process of developing the Leopold Forest, a showcase event of the 2009 Centennial Celebration. Martin was instrumental in bringing the plan from paper to reality on the land. We'll find out how the Forest relates to the original Leopold trail in the Bosque and what AWF can do long-term to support the area. This is the site of our February project (see p3), so this program will be especially meaningful to those who plan to be at the Bosque on the 20th. (As he pursues an additional degree, *Martin is reading all of Aldo Leopold's books!*)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last month's AWF meeting, where Tony Anella and Dara Johnson spoke about the 2009 Leopold Centennial Celebration, was very well attended...such an excellent start to the new year. Our monthly meetings are an important component of the mission of Albuquerque Wildlife Federation: our guest speakers help us increase appreciation and knowledge of our wildlife and wild lands, and also provide a forum for discussing resource issues of concern.

We strive to be timely, informative, educational...maybe—very occasionally—just a bit controversial. We try to invite speakers with a unique message, a special expertise, with access to the particulars of programs and establishments that may otherwise remain opaque to us.

Please make an effort to attend a few of our monthly meetings this year. Our guests frequently say the number of attendees doesn't matter when they speak...but it truly makes me happy when many chairs are filled for our programs. (*Thank you to those loyal members who are always there!*) It is also a great opportunity to visit with others. And remember—we provide refreshments.

Glenda Muirhead

Jim Hubert's
NOTABLE QUOTE
of the month

"I asked [Lyons] explicitly — 'how does this land transfer benefit the school children of the State of New Mexico?' — and he couldn't answer the question."

— *State of New Mexico Representative Brian Egolf, regarding State Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons' arcane Whites Peak land trade Dec 2009*

AWF MEMBERS & FRIENDS***Speak Out***

...I personally support the multiple use ethic, and I believe that our public lands need to meet the diverse needs of the nation's citizens. I have no objection to livestock grazing as one use of our public lands. However, as with any use, it must be carefully managed so that it does not impair other uses of the land. In this particular area, I am concerned that the grazing has been mismanaged and resulted in serious degradation of the landscape....

— Kristina G. Fisher

...Properly maintained fences are crucial to any attempt to keep the landscape productive. The BLM should, at a minimum, have the resources to do this for lands for which it is responsible. The Cebolla Wilderness Area of El Malpais National Conservation Area is an example of what happens where the fences have not been maintained....

— Dewey Moore and Shelley Roberts

...I understand...that cattle are not supposed to be in these riparian pastures which are fenced off. The difficult restoration work being done here, turning a degraded, barren arroyo into one that can hold water and vegetation, is sensitive to the heavy hooves and eating habits of domestic cattle... How can we see the true progress of our restoration work if it has to have this pressure from illegal cattle grazing? I'll answer that one for you, we can't.

— Peter Callen

...Threatening this diverse and fragile area is the seemingly unmanaged cattle grazing in the arroyo and in the pastures above it...In my travels as a journalist I have written about multiple land use issues and the intersection of business interests and environmental degradation. Sometimes a healthy balance can be achieved but sometimes an extractive use that benefits a few diminishes a landscape for all...My sense is if BLM doesn't establish and enforce a resource plan to adequately manage the cattle in this valuable but vulnerable area, it will be ruined.

—Steve Ginsberg

WHY ARE CATTLE Grazing IN THE CEBOLLA WILDERNESS?

Gene Tatum, long troubled by the BLM's management of cattle grazing at the location of one of AWF's favorite projects, Cebolla Canyon south of Grants, encouraged participants from our October 2009 project there to write letters to the agency expressing their concerns about current practices (some excerpts shown at left). Below is the response received by one of the letter writers from Mr. Thomas Gow, BLM Field Manager for the area. Interestingly, the "significant improvement in riparian characteristics" Mr. Gow refers to (underlined here in red) is actually, in large part, the result of the "continued efforts" by **AWF volunteers** over the years.

Dear Interested Public:

Thank you for expressing your concern for the health and well being of the Cebolla Canyon Riparian Area. Your comments are highly valued as constructive feedback.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is actively engaged in pursuing ecological restoration projects in Cebolla Canyon that will benefit and enhance riparian characteristics for the improvement of wildlife and rangeland habitat. Due to continued efforts to implement riparian restoration, Cebolla Canyon has seen significant improvement in riparian characteristics such as the establishment of stabilizing riparian vegetation and increased water retention. Protection and restoration of this valued resource continually remain a priority as we see ongoing improvement in response to restorative actions.

The BLM is faced with the challenge of ascertaining the impacts of a large multitude of uses on the human environment and only utilizes and implements the best research and technology in our decision-making processes.

At present, BLM management and range staff are reevaluating the current grazing practices in Cebolla Canyon in an effort to develop a grazing prescription that will facilitate further restoration and enhancement of its riparian qualities.

For further information regarding the fundamental principles the BLM employs in land management practices (including the BLM Mission Statement) as well as information regarding current projects, please feel free to visit the BLM website at www.blm.gov. The input you provided will be classified as an official public comment and will be considered in future planning efforts. Thank you for your passionate concern regarding the health of resource qualities in Cebolla Canyon. I hope this response has adequately addressed your concerns.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Gow
Field Manager

AWF OFFICERS AND BOARD

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ALBUQUERQUE WILDLIFE FEDERATION
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<http://abq.nmwildlife.org>

AWF MEETING LOCATION

Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center
501 Elizabeth SE at Southern



Team Up For Wildlife Project

ALDO LEOPOLD FOREST at the Albuquerque Bosque

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010

We kick off AWF's project season with a one-day event at the Albuquerque Bosque, with a mission of planting **100 cottonwood trees in the Aldo Leopold Forest**. This site was dedicated in February 2009, and AWF celebrated that event by co-sponsoring a planting with Roots & Shoots, who mustered an impressive turnout of school kids and parents to help with the task. We'll be on our own this year, so come on out and get your hands dirty!

The Forest is approximately 53 acres in size, extending from the north boundary of the Nature Center to the southeast side of the Montaño Bridge. As there is no nearby parking on the east side of the river, we will park west of the Rio Grande at the Pueblo Montaño trailhead (see map and directions below) and walk across the **Montaño Bridge** to the Forest, a bit south of Montaño. Please allow enough time for this bridge crossing, which may take up to 15 minutes. Enjoy the views from the bridge as you make your way to the project site. **NOTE:** We'll have coffee, hot chocolate, and bagels to reward you for the effort!

Please plan to **arrive at the planting site between 9:30 and 9:45 am**, to allow time for signing in and having some refreshments before we get an overview and guidance at 10:00 from Martin Martinez, City Open Space Division Forester. (Martin is also the Guest Speaker for our February meeting on the 11th.)

And please bring a lunch. AWF will have drinks and snacks for participants.

Good news!

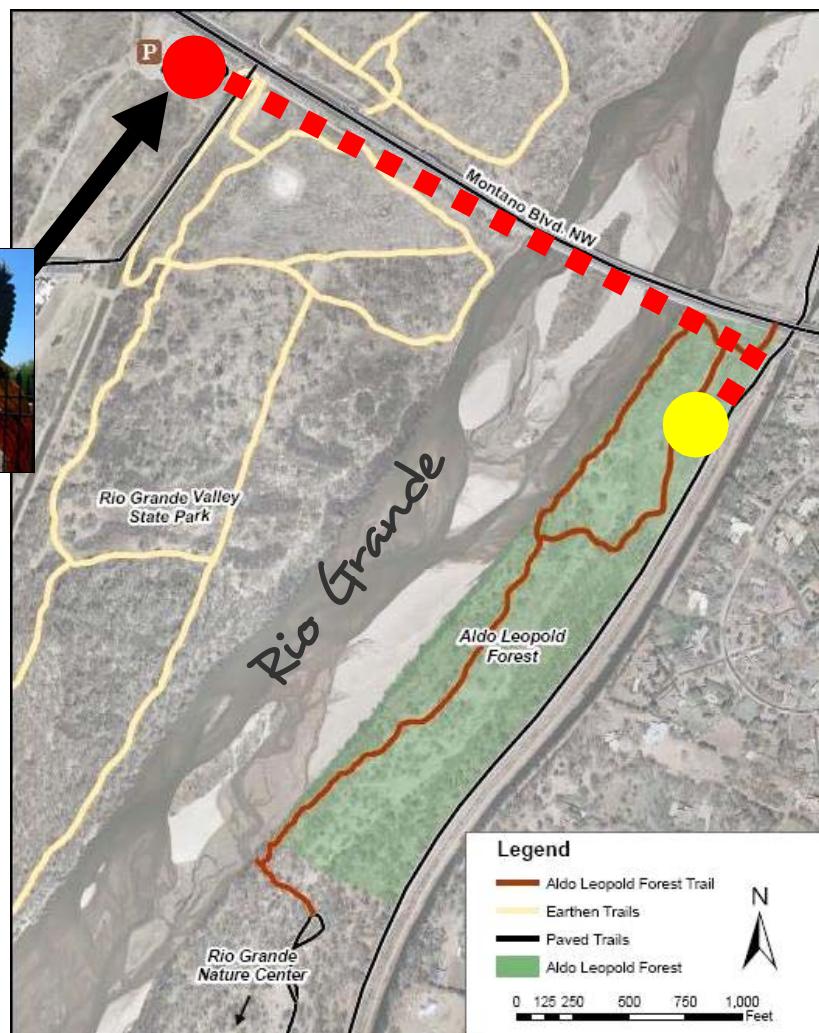
Holes for the cottonwoods we'll be planting will be pre-dug that morning, so we won't have to do battle with the hard soil to get the trees into the ground.



Pueblo Montaño parking area
is located south of Montaño Road;
east of Coors Boulevard;
and west of the Rio Grande.

TO SIGN UP: Contact

Glenda Muirhead (505-281-2925
or g.muirhead@usfamily.net).



Notes from the Projects Chair

BLM PUBLIC LANDS: THE BEGINNING -- UNCLAIMED AND VACANT

Second in a series by Gene Tatum, AWF Vice President

The following is an abridged history. Much of this information is from *Opportunity and Challenge: The Story of the BLM* by James Muhn and Hanson R. Stuart, published in 1988 by US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Additional information can be found at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/About_BLM.html

The Bureau of Land Management oversees 253 million surface acres, and 700 million acres of subsurface minerals which are located under lands not owned by the federal government. Most of the public lands are located in the 11 continental western states and Alaska, totaling about 13 percent of the total land surface of the United States and more than 40 percent of all land managed by the federal government. It is important to note that our BLM public lands are those which remained unclaimed after settlement of the west.

To settle the west, families had to uproot and travel across the frontier—a significant hardship. To promote relocation and occupancy of the vast landscape west of the Mississippi, incentives and opportunity were provided: lands were made available for homesteading, timber harvest, railroads and mining.

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 opened the door to westward movement. Land sales by the federal government boomed. In 1812 Congress formed the General Land Office (GLO) to manage the public lands business. The GLO was one of the predecessors of the BLM.

Until 1860 federal land was generally sold or provided as an incentive for those who served in the armed services during war. President Lincoln in 1862 signed the Homestead Act which allowed application for 160 acres; after five years of occupancy and cultivation ownership was granted. The initial thrust into the west was for farming and the best lands were taken first. The prairies of the mid-west were plowed.

As the settlement continued into more arid lands, the homesteading laws were changed to encourage continued settlement. The Stock Grazing Homestead Act of 1916 provided 640 acres of land, with three-year occupancy leading to outright ownership. This act provided a shift in use from the plow to sheep and cattle. For those homesteading, 640 acres sounded like a lot of land. However, in the arid west 640 acres were still not enough to make a living.

By 1916, most of the lands still owned by the federal government and available for

homesteading were of low productivity for farming—the soils were poor or rainfall was limited. Settlers of the arid lands were dependent on the west's open range for livestock grazing. This was not typically the place to set up a homestead. The open range had already been overgrazed in the 1870's through 1890's. This last homesteading era added more grazing use to lands that had not recovered.

Conflicts for grazing use of the open range between livestock grazers were common. The old cowboy movies showing range wars were factual. Sheep men vs. cattlemen, large rancher vs. small rancher... all were at odds. In arid areas like New Mexico, water for livestock as well as humans was as important as land.

Beginning in the late 1930's, the federal government had become involved with developing ways to solve the grazing conflicts on the unclaimed western federal lands. By 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act was passed that formed the Grazing Service for the purpose of stabilizing the livestock industry by creating a system for allocating the unclaimed public land among various grazing interests. The Taylor Act referred to these as the Vacant Lands and provided for their care until they were disposed. These vacant lands are currently the BLM public lands.

2010 PROJECT SCHEDULE

February 20	Tree Planting at Aldo Leopold Forest (<i>Albuquerque Bosque</i>)
March 20	Cedro Creek (<i>East Mountains</i>)
April 16-18	Cebolla Canyon I
May 14-16	Limestone Canyon (<i>San Mateo Mountains</i>)
June 18-20	* Mount Taylor or Cuba Ranger District
July 16-18	Valle Vidal
August 20-22	Valles Caldera National Preserve
September 17-19	Cebolla Canyon II
October 16	Local Day Project and End of Season Celebration

* Subject to change

To sign up for any of these projects, please contact Glenda Muirhead at 505-281-2925 or g.muirhead@usfamily.net by Monday prior to the project weekend.

RENEWED MEMBERS

Van Clothier
 Marjorie Gerber
 James Hines—*Sustaining*
 James Hubert
 Rich E. Leonard—*Patron*
 Laurie Marnell—*Sustaining*
 Cliff & Joyce Mendel—*Sustaining*
 Larry & Mariane Miller
 Dennis & Glenda Muirhead
 Kurt Nolte
 Linda Patterson
 Kent Salazar—*Sustaining*
 Gene Tatum & Pat Hester—*Patron*
 Aija & Phil Thacher—*Sustaining*

Thank You!

CONCERNs RAISED OVER HJM31

Memorial Calls for a Study of Off-Highway Vehicle Use

House Joint Memorial 31 was introduced during the current New Mexico Legislative session. It requests that the Department of Game and Fish make a distribution from the Trail Safety Fund to contract a study of off-highway motor vehicle use in New Mexico to identify the communities best suited for such use, to encourage and support the development of strong rural economies.

Opponents of this Memorial believe it should be defeated. Its language directs the study authors to use the same methods used in studies done in Colorado and Arizona. The latter study in particular includes the economic contributions of people using SUVs and other vehicles to access public lands for **non-motorized** objectives. This leads to hugely inflated estimates of economic activity, as much as four- or fivefold. Basically, the strategy is to count non-motorized recreation to inflate the contribution of ATVs, dirt bikes, and Jeeps. Also, these studies include zero costs such as damage to and depletion of natural resources, medical costs, displacement of non-motorized recreationists, and so forth.

This proposed memorial takes money from New Mexico's 2009 OHV trails act, funds which are necessary for enforcement and education programs. Work is just beginning on OHV regulation and resource/safety education, and HJM31 is viewed by many as an attempt by the OHV industry and supporters to subvert this work before it can start.

The memorial proposes to measure the economic **BENEFITS** of OHVs in New Mexico, without measuring the **COSTS**.

— Based on information provided by Carol Johnson and Bob Funkhouser

NEWS FROM NMF

WHITES PEAK TRADES OPPOSED

More than 70 hunters and Whites Peak advocates stood in the falling snow outside the State Capitol on Jan. 19 to voice their opposition to the trades. Concerned Sportsmen of Northern New Mexico organized the protest and chartered a bus to bring hunters and outdoor enthusiasts from Las Vegas.

And despite Commissioner Lyons' promises that the trades would be good for New Mexico's public schools, the East Las Vegas School Board unanimously opposed the trade. In a resolution, the board said Las Vegas schools would receive a pittance in extra funds compared with the tremendous loss to the community if the trades are allowed to stand.

NEW DEPREDATION LEGISLATION

House Bill 73 passed its first committee, then unexpectedly got steered to the Business and Industry Committee, where it now appears to be stalled and running out of time.

HB 73 would replace the existing depredation statute, also known as the Jennings Law, which has led to numerous wasteful mass slaughters of big game animals since its enactment. The new bill will again make it illegal for a landowner to kill big game without a license for merely threatening crops. The measure requires the Department of Game and Fish to work with landowners to resolve their depredation problems through other means, such as population reduction hunts or fencing.

GAME COMMISSIONER NAMED

Las Cruces pecan farmer Thomas "Dick" Salopek has been appointed to the Game Commission by Gov. Bill Richardson. He fills the statewide seat representing landowner and agricultural interests on the commission. Member Leo Sims of Artesia was not reappointed at the end of his term.

DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS NEW DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTS

Desert bighorn sheep numbers have more than doubled in the last decade in New Mexico and the Department of Game and Fish is proposing to increase the number of hunting areas and tags. In a meeting with hunters in Albuquerque last week, department biologist Elise Goldstein said the desert bighorn population could hit 590 by the time new hunts would begin in 2011. Her preliminary proposal is to harvest another 14 to 26 rams statewide. Currently just one tag is available through the public draw, with another offered through a Wild Sheep Foundation raffle.

Goldstein said sportsmen made several suggestions about the proposed hunts, such as offering two or more hunts in areas that get multiple tags. The department will submit its recommendations to the State Game Commission later this year. If the commission agrees, the hunts would be included in the 2011-12 big game proclamation.

NM LEGISLATIVE SESSION: Selected Bills of Special Interest

Current as of February 3. Thank you to Brian Gleadle, NMDGF and AWF Board member, for the updates.

HB 27: RECOVERY OF DAMAGES TO NATURAL RESOURCES (Egolf) – Provides additions to the Natural Resources Trustee Act to allow the state to recover damages for injury to natural resources (including wildlife) from release of injurious substances into the environment.

- 12/21/09 – Bill was pre-filed and sent to the House Energy & Natural Resources Committee.

HB 51: SAN JUAN RIVER SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS (Taylor) – Would authorize the state game commission to designate special trophy fisheries management areas on the San Juan River below Navajo dam and require any person angling in such areas to purchase a San Juan river special management permit in addition to a valid fishing license, costing \$5.00 for New Mexico residents and \$10.00 for nonresidents. This stamp is expected to generate \$355,000 per year.

- Bill received a “Do Pass” from House Consumer & Public Affairs. Amended to specify repeal June 30, 2020. Now goes to House Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

HB 61: PROHIBIT WOLF REINTRODUCTION (Bandy) – Would prohibit the State Game Commission and the Department of Game and Fish from conducting or cooperating in introduction of the Mexican gray wolf into New Mexico that does not provide for immediate compensation of equal monetary value for damage to property, livelihood or public peace, health and safety.

- 1/20/10 – Sent to House Rules and Order of Business Committee. Subsequently tabled in Committee with no determination on relevance to the legislative session.

HB 73: TAKING OF CERTAIN ANIMAL SPECIES (Stewart) – Will repeal the current Landowners’ Taking statute and replace it with new statutory authority that provides for taking of predators only that threaten human life or property; provides options for assistance to remedy current or potential damage to property; and increases the big game depredation damage stamp fee.

- 1/20/10 – Sent to the House Health and Government Affairs Committee.
- 1/26/10 – Received a “Do Pass” from the House Health and Government Affairs Committee by a vote of 5-3. Now goes to the House Business & Industry Committee.

HB 213: CREATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT DEPT (O’Neill) – Will create the Natural Resources and Environment Department by consolidating the Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department, the Department of Environment, and the Natural Resources Trustee.

- 1/28/10 – Sent to the House Rules & Order of Business Committee.

HJM 31: STUDY OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE (Tripp) – Requests that the Department of Game and Fish make a distribution from the Trail Safety Fund to contract a study of Off-Highway motor vehicle use in New Mexico to identify the communities best suited for off-highway motor vehicle use to encourage and support the development of strong rural economies.

- 1/26/10 – Sent to the House Energy & Natural Resources Committee.

HJM 32: ENFORCE OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE ACT (Tripp) – (Similar to SJM 31) –

This joint memorial requests that the Department of Game and Fish enforce the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act, to include creating a proposal for the design and implementation of a statewide youth safety training program.

- 1/26/10 – Joint Memorial introduced and sent to the House Transportation and Public Works Committee.

SM 16: STUDY INCREASING HUNTING PERMITS (Ulibarri) – This memorial requests the state game commission and the department of game and fish to study methods and programs that will increase the number of hunting licenses for New Mexico residents, including habitat conservation, the methodology of drawings, and active collaboration with Indian nations, tribes, and pueblos in New Mexico.

- 1/21/10 – Memorial introduced and sent to the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 186: NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT (Cisneros) – This legislation will create the Natural Heritage Conservation Act administered out of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department to protect the state’s natural heritage by funding acquisitions of land, conservation easements and other property interests and by funding land restoration, to protect the land and water available for forests and watersheds, natural areas, wildlife and wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, outdoor recreation and trails and land and habitat restoration and management.

- 1/25/10 – Sent to the Senate Committees Committee.
- 1/27/10 – Bill determined to be germane to the legislative session, now goes to the Senate Conservation Committee.

ALBUQUERQUE WILDLIFE FEDERATION - PO BOX 1234 - ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87103

An affiliate of New Mexico Wildlife Federation

AWF membership ONLY or AWF + NMWF membership: Designate NMWF member(s) _____

name(s) _____

address _____

city, state, zip _____

phone _____ email _____

Gift membership from: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student [under 18] | \$10 | ◀ AWF Membership Only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual..... | \$25 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$35 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining..... | \$50-\$99 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron..... | \$100 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime | \$500 | ◀ One-time Payment |

Dues \$ _____

Contribution \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____