

AWF **ewsletter**

OCTOBER 2012

Jim Hubert's **Notable Quote of the Month**

"Typically, heavy machinery isn't the first thing to come to mind when you think of habitat restoration. The San Juan River has faced some big challenges ---dam construction, water diversion, non-native species--- and some of these obstacles take big equipment to fix. In all, 3.5 miles of secondary channel and back water habitat have been restored, something we can take as a sign of hope for this important New Mexico river."

— Patrick McCarthy, *The Nature Conservancy, Spring 2012*
NM Director's Update

MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, October 11, 2012 | 7:30 pm

Manzano Mesa Center (*map p2*)

Mustangs in the West: Challenges, Innovations and Freedom

Sky Mountain Wild Horse Sanctuary works with people from across the country to keep wild horses safe and running free forever. The sanctuary, founded in the summer of 2007 and headquartered in the heart of northern NM, provides a haven for wild horses while seeking to protect wild lands where these horses can roam.

The group seeks to foster humane treatment of wild life and a conservation ethic through research, action, and education. Please join us as co-founder Karen Herman discusses key challenges facing wild horses today, the development of Sky Mountain Wild Horse Sanctuary here in New Mexico, and promising innovations for humane treatment for wild horses and for keeping them free.

Karen Herman, Ph.D., is co-founder and president of Sky Mountain Wild Horse Sanctuary. She is also a consultant, clinician, and researcher working to address sexual violence and authored *Art, Violence, & Social Change: Challenging Violence Against Women and Girls Through Entertainment Education*. She is director of sexual assault services for the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs in Albuquerque.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As many know, I work as the Bosque Project Manager for the Pueblo of Sandia. As with most of the bosque from Cochiti to Elephant Butte, the major focus of the program is fuels reduction through removal of non-native trees like tamarisk (salt cedar) and Russian olive and habitat protection or creation, especially for endangered species. These are no easy tasks. Non-natives are prevalent because they do well here and often respond to disturbance by sprouting further. Endangered species reflect the radical changes that we have forced upon the river, especially in the last century, culminating in the biggest ecological blow to the system -- Cochiti Dam.

continued on next page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued

Of course, what we think of as the “bosque” is a modern construct. In even historical times, there was never a continuous batch of cottonwoods for two hundred miles. I was reading recently about journals from the 1800’s which state that it was hard to even find a cottonwood or any other tree on the Rio Grande because they had been so extensively harvested for fuel and timber. What we see today are the cottonwoods that grew in large quantities in response to various floods in the 1900’s. The ongoing battle with the river and the need for evermore farmland meant more and more flood control structures as well as draining of the marshes that were an integral part of the ecological matrix of the Rio Grande.



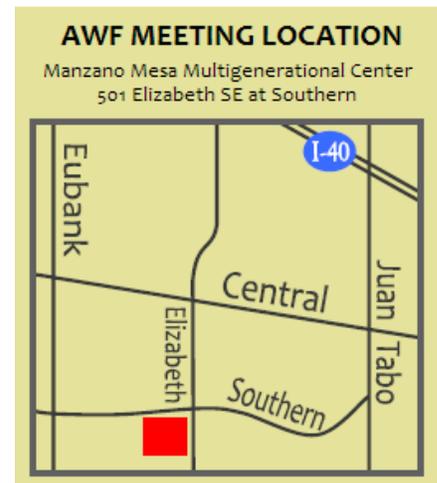
Photo courtesy of meganeaveswriting.com

Without new sediment (stopped at Cochiti Dam), the river has incised. This separates it from its floodplain (even if there were decent flows again) so there is no overbank flooding. Cottonwood seeds respond to flood events, so without them, regeneration is limited. Over the past year of my job, I’ve come to realize that what we think of as the “bosque” is going to change as the rate of older cottonwoods dying becomes significantly greater than the rate of reproduction. It wouldn’t be possible to plant them fast enough, regardless of funding.

Recent events have me wondering if the change in the bosque that I thought was going to unfold over 20-40 years is going to happen much faster. A couple of fellow Bosque Managers came by in late August to talk about a 10-acre patch of dead cottonwoods they were dealing with. In 2011, the trees yellowed too early and didn’t even resprout from the base this year. They were especially concerned since cottonwoods all over were yellowing early this year. Since then I have found two patches, about two acres in size, of cottonwoods that have lost their leaves and likely will not resprout next year. It turns out the early yellowing was reported all the way down to Bosque del Apache. Fortunately, it has stayed to patches of trees and just branches of them. Fall is now upon us and it looks normal. Besides the yellowing, there is a fungus, marssonina, which causes brown spots on the leaves. It’s always present, but not in the scale that is being seen now.

Twenty years of mostly drought, with the last two being the worst, are probably taking their toll on top of all the other ravages that have been put upon the Rio Grande riparian ecosystem. Next year is a new year, but if what is being seen now unfolds as quickly as it seems it will, then the bosque in 10 years (not 40) will be very different from now. At the scale that is being seen, about all that can be done is to document its occurrence and try to look beyond.

Scial



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abq.nmwildlife.org

PROJECT #8

Local Day Project and Picnic: Sandia Mountains October 20, 2012

Albuquerque Wildlife Federation's last Volunteer Service Project of 2012 will be on Sat, Oct 20. It will be a local project in the Sandia Mountains. After we finish working, we'll have a grill and potluck to celebrate our accomplishments for 2012 while we look forward to the 2013 project season.

WHERE: The Sandia Mountains are the backdrop to ABQ. We'll head to the back (east) side on the road that heads up toward the ski area.

THE PROJECT: We will be doing spring and arroyo restoration.

GEAR: Everything you need for a day of volunteer work. Bring the usual gear for the work – gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. Don't forget warm clothes/rain gear just in case and plenty of water.

FOOD: Bring snacks and a lunch. After the project we will have a potluck. AWF will provide bison/veggie burgers. Bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share.

TO SIGN UP: Contact Michael Scialdone, "Scial", at rioscial@gmail.com or 505-480-2906. Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We neglected to give proper credit after Valles Caldera I in July to **Van Clothier, of Stream Dynamics, Inc. (Silver City)**. Thanks, Van, for your expert guidance and supervision!



AUGUST PROJECT RECAP VALLES CALDERA II

Great AWF outing once again in August at Valles Caldera in association with Los Amigos de Valles Caldera, the NM Environment Department, and AmeriCorps volunteers. We thank **Steve Vrooman, of Restoration Ecology**, for his skillful and cheerful guidance.

In Scial's absence, we appreciated the excellent culinary skills of Kristina Fisher and Phil Carter on the Saturday morning breakfast burritos, and Rodney Conant with his evening taco bar to headline our potluck meal. We missed you, Scial, but we were well taken care of!

FROM JACK & DARLENE CRANE OF LOS AMIGOS:

Our thanks again for all the support AWF provided for the Los Amigos' wetlands restoration workshop in the Valle Santa Rosa. Jack inventoried eight Zuni bowls, 19 one rack dams, and 11 rock run downs for the weekend and more than one half of them were "monsters". Your travel and hours of hard (but rewarding, we hope) work assisted Los Amigos in providing the necessary "match" required for our grants from the State. In the words of one AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, "You guys are the best."

VALLES CALDERA II : A GREAT CREW OF VOLUNTEERS!



Stephen Bohannon fuels up with a breakfast burrito... then gets down and dirty as the undisputed "Zuni Bowl Master" among AWF volunteers!



PROJECT RECAP | SEPTEMBER

Limestone Canyon



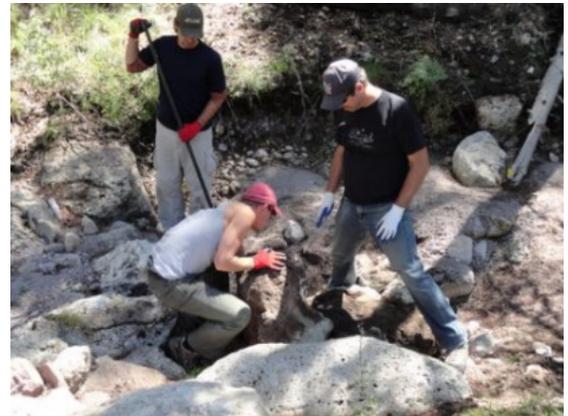
This was our fifth project in six years at Limestone Canyon, in the NW part of the San Mateo Mountains that are SW of Magdalena. The first couple of years' work resulted in large amounts of sediment being held back. Now that is translating into more water staying in the canyon, to the degree that there are nearly permanent pools of water and the meadows are being underwelled. Vegetation is responding accordingly, with sedges and rushes lining the creekbed and overall the channel is narrowing. Cutbanks are healing. The remnant stand of cottonwoods is sending up numerous shoots, some out in the middle of the adjacent meadow, meaning they are following water out that far.

Kristina G. Fisher took a terrific set of shots of folks from the weekend as well as a top-to-bottom pictorial of all the structures we have made over the years and several shots of the various cottonwood resprouts.

[Click on this link to view her picasa photo album online.](#)

Take a look at Kristina's album. Those that have been to the Limestone Canyon Project in years past might enjoy seeing what is taking place there. And some of you haven't been, but have some relation to the work of AWF...you might also enjoy seeing what is going on.

We will be back to Limestone Canyon in 2013 for at least one project and hopefully two, likely May or June and September. We are looking at expanding the work area as well as doing some planting and building exclosures to protect the cottonwood shoots. The Forest Service is looking at the possibility of reintroducing leopard frogs to the area. I hope to see you there in 2013!



Scial

Here are a couple of photos of flows from spring run-off to show the structures in action.



Below is some great news about the Wind River Ranch north of Las Vegas. AWF has hosted some Volunteer Service Projects there on the Mora River and we are very excited about its continued protection and conservation as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Wind River Ranch Now Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

The Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, which Interior Secretary Ken Salazar established as the 560th unit of the refuge system on September 27th, is located in the transition zone between the Great Plains and the Southern Rocky Mountains. The Mora River flows through the center of the refuge for approximately five miles in a 250-300-foot deep canyon.

The establishment of the refuge and conservation area is a continuation of the vision of philanthropist Eugene V. Thaw and his wife Clare E. Thaw who bought the Wind River Ranch in 1980 with the intent of protecting and restoring the land as a representative piece of southwestern ecological heritage.

“The transfer of Wind River Ranch to the ownership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seems the perfect solution for this strategically located piece of land and its important stretch of the Mora River,” said Eugene Thaw. “We hope that this transfer will serve as the catalyst for a new era in range management, wildlife studies and sustainable agriculture for this whole area of the Southwest. We are grateful to Secretary Salazar and his talented staff for seeing the great possibilities at Wind River for environmental protection, science and education.”

Inclusion of this important ranch and conservation area into the refuge system, coupled with the newly established Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area in Colorado, creates a wildlife corridor that will ensure protection and restoration of the Mora River watershed and one of the great prairie grassland landscapes of North America. It will benefit many grassland and woodland species, including the southwestern willow flycatcher.



The long term plan for the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge will include opportunities for the public to enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife watching, education, and hunting.

MORE INFORMATION:

http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/3_30_2012RioMoraPU2.pdf

The LAND QUILT was also featured in an article by David Steinberg, *The Sunday Journal*, September 16, 2012.

LAND QUILT



Unique Installation at UNM North Golf Course to Promote Native Plant Growth

Although the LAND QUILT is inspired by the landscape of the arid Southwest and is the culmination of several years of work, this summer's nationwide drought may make it especially timely in other parts of the country. Our hope is that the LAND QUILT will inspire other citizens to restore the barren landscapes in their communities.

The word “quilt” connotes a nurturing relationship with whatever it covers. It also suggests a sense of community spirit and collaboration based on the tradition of quilting bees. The Land Quilt enlarges this community spirit to include the soils, waters, plants, and animals that Aldo Leopold referred to collectively as “the land.”

Each “patch” of the Land Quilt concentrates natural precipitation with a fabric funnel stretched over a wire frame staked into the ground. Below the funnel and hollowed in the soil is a seed ball consisting of native seeds, clay and compost. When the Land Quilt is removed after the monsoon season (15 July – 15 October 2012), our hope is that patches of native plants, germinated with the help of the concentrated rainfall, will remain. The Land Quilt intends to restore part of the barren fairways on the UNM North Golf Course in Albuquerque. At the conclusion of this inaugural installation, our hope is that the Land Quilt will inspire other citizens to reuse the “patches” to blanket the barren landscapes in their communities.

– By Tony Anella and Cara McCulloch © 2011

For more information about the piece, please visit www.landquilt.com

News From

NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Hunting Access Bill

The HUNT Act (HR 6086) has been applauded by sportsmen across the nation as a commonsense approach to reducing a key problem that faces hunters and anglers: access to public lands. The national polling firm Southwick and Associates found that nearly one in four hunters nationwide reported losing access to a hunting area in the past year, and that 52 percent said lack of access to a hunting area reduced their hunting time in 2011. Two decades ago, the Government Accountability Office found that 50.4 million acres had inadequate public access. Although nobody has tracked the problem since then, most sportsmen feel the problem of landlocked public lands has only gotten worse.

HR 6086 would require federal public land agencies such as the BLM and U.S. Forest Service to inventory all parcels of public land over one square mile in size where hunting and fishing is legal, but the public cannot reach the land because a public access road or trail has been closed or privatized. The agencies would then need to develop a plan to provide access to those inaccessible parcels with recreational potential. The bill calls for using a small portion of federal offshore oil and gas revenues to acquire easements or rights-of-way from willing landowners.

- The HUNT Act would establish with certainty how much federal public land with recreational opportunity is inaccessible to the public – and whether or not we are making progress on solving the problem;
- The HUNT Act would require agencies like the BLM and Forest Service to develop plans to reopen landlocked public lands with recreational potential to the public, using existing funds to work with willing landowners or state or local governments;
- The HUNT Act would create jobs and stimulate local rural economies by opening millions of acres of public land to hunters and anglers.
- The HUNT Act is unlike the legislation passed earlier this year that contained provisions to track how much land the agencies themselves have closed to hunting or shooting and to make it harder for agencies to outlaw hunting or shooting. The HUNT Act is designed to open public access to lands where hunting and fishing are already legal, but where there is no public access.

Former Price's Dairy Is Now Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

NM gains protected public land

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar was in New Mexico on Thursday, Sept. 27, to dedicate two new national wildlife refuges. In Albuquerque's South Valley he officially dedicated the **Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge**, several hundred acres of prime waterfowl habitat along the Rio Grande that formerly was Price's Dairy. It is the first urban national wildlife refuge in the Southwest.

It was made possible by a strong showing of local support, including \$5 million from Bernalillo County and several million dollars more from other agencies and nonprofit groups. At the ceremony with Salazar (pictured below, in cowboy hat) were Rep. Martin Heinrich, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, former County Commission Chairman Art de la Cruz and others.



Later the secretary drove to northern New Mexico, near the village of Watrous, where he dedicated the **Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area**. *[More on Rio Mora on pg 5.]* The former Wind River Ranch

contains more than 4,200 acres of important wildlife habitat along the Mora River that was donated by the Thaw Charitable Foundation.

“These new refuges will enable us to protect and enhance important wildlife habitat in New Mexico,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe said in a release. “At the same time, they will provide numerous recreational and educational opportunities for the area’s youth and local communities,” he said.

You are invited to
The Inaugural Aldo & Estella Leopold Residency Lecture

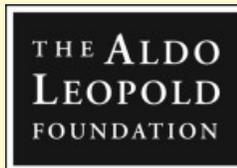
The Land Ethic in the 21st Century:
 A View from Aldo Leopold's "Mi Casita" in Tres Piedras
Courtney White

Co-founder and Executive Director of the Quivira Coalition

6:30 - 8:30 pm | Thursday 18 October 2012

Fechin House, just north of Kit Carson Park in Taos, NM

The purpose of the Aldo & Estella Leopold Residency is to provide an inspiring retreat for distinguished and emerging writers to reflect and to create in the physical context of Leopold's "Mi Casita" in the Carson National Forest of northern New Mexico and in the intellectual context of land ethics. Our mission is to raise the cultural awareness of the relevancy of Aldo Leopold's ideas in addressing the pressing environmental issues of our time. For more information please go to: www.aldoleopold.org.



A W F M E M B E R S H I P A P P L I C A T I O N

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