Battling for Access to New Mexico’s Public Trust Lands

It’s been a busy season at the New Mexico Game Commission.

As we reported in the August issue of the newsletter, the Commission has recently opened up New Mexico’s public lands to cougar trapping and significantly increased the numbers of bears and cougars that can be killed in the state. In the past few weeks, the Game Commission also repeatedly rejected a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service request to release two adult Mexican gray wolves and their pups into the Gila, as well as place up to 10 wolf pups into active dens so they could be fostered. These actions are important to improve the genetic diversity of the Mexican gray wolf population, which has a wild population of only 110 animals.

Now the Commission is squaring off against the State Land Office in an effort to maintain access to state public lands for hunting and fishing. As the New Mexico Wildlife Federation writes:

“The State Game Commission made it clear this week that it’s willing to play hardball with the State Land Office over sportsmen’s traditional access to millions of acres of State Trust Land – which could mean no hunting, fishing or trapping on those lands for a year or more.

But State Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn was even more entrenched than the Commission. Seated across from them Tuesday [September 29] in Albuquerque, he insisted on charging at least $1 million a year for access that in the past has cost just $200,000 – a whopping five-fold increase that is essentially a special tax on New Mexico sportsmen and women. And even that rate could be for the same treatment hunters have received for years – virtually no camping, dusk-to-dawn closures, limited scouting, payment for inaccessible or unhuntable tracts, and too many illegally locked gates.”

The New Mexico Wildlife Federation also notes that “it appears New Mexico sportsmen and women are being singled out, because neither the oil and gas industry nor ranchers have seen their state land leases increase five-fold. Dunn plans to increase State Lands grazing fees to $4.80/AUM (from $3.90), but if he were to apply the same increase as he’s proposing for the NMDGF lease, grazing lessees would have to pay $19.95/AUM. Oil and gas lease rates remain unchanged, even though they account for 97 percent of the Land Office’s revenue. State oil and gas royalty rates in Texas are 25 percent; in New Mexico just 18.5 percent. Upping oil and gas rates even 1 percent on future leases would be a true boon for the Land Office’s beneficiaries.”

Final action on state trust land access for hunting and fishing is expected to come during the November 19 meeting of the Game Commission in Roswell. If you are interested in learning more about these issues, we encourage you to join us Thursday, October 8 for a discussion with Joel Gay of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

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Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Vice-President
OCTOBER 2015 EDUCATIONAL SPEAKER: Joel Gay

Thursday, October 8, 2015, 7:30 pm
Albuquerque Friends Meeting House
1600 5th Street Northwest

Topic: Update from the New Mexico Wildlife Federation
There’s a lot going on at the New Mexico Wildlife Federation these days, so Joel Gay will bring folks up to speed on a wide range of issues, including internal changes at NMWF (new staff members and updated bylaws) and NMWF’s ongoing campaigns related to the proposed Gila River diversion project, national forest planning across many of New Mexico’s forests, expanding the Pecos Wilderness, and battling the never-ending efforts to transfer millions of acres of national public lands to the state. Joel will also discuss the recent controversial decisions related to wildlife management by the State Game Commission and the Legislature.

Speaker Bio:
Joel Gay has been communications director at NMWF since 2008. He grew up in Albuquerque and graduated from UNM but spent 30 years in Alaska before returning to New Mexico 10 years ago. He has worked at several newspapers, including the final years of the Albuquerque Tribune, and is an avid outdoorsman — hunting, fishing, backcountry skiing, mountain biking and hiking.

Directions to the Meeting:
The Albuquerque Friends Meeting House is located at the corner of 5th and Bellamah. From I-40, take the 6th street exit, then South to Bellamah.
OCTOBER 17, 2015 SERVICE PROJECT: Cedro Creek

**LOCATION:** Cedro Creek in the Sandia Mountains, near Tijeras, NM

**THE PROJECT:** For our final volunteer restoration service project of the season, we will be returning to one of our legacy sites, Cedro Creek in the Sandia Mountains. Our work will focus on building rock structures to arrest downcutting and stabilize the channel. After we finish up our work, we'll gather for a late lunch potluck (around 2:00) to celebrate all the great restoration work accomplished by AWF volunteers during the 2015 season!

**SCHEDULE:** Saturday, October 17, 9:00-4:00

**GEAR:** Bring everything you need for a day of outdoor work, including gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Dress in layers to be prepared for New Mexico's variable weather.

**FOOD:** AWF will provide bison or veggie burgers for the afternoon potluck. Please bring a dish to share along with snacks and water for the work day.

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

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Thanks to the hard-working volunteers who joined us for the October 3 project on Glorieta Mesa! Photos and a re-cap of that project will appear in next month's newsletter.

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**2015 SERVICE PROJECTS CALENDAR**

- March 7..............Day project at Valle de Oro
- April 17-19...........Cebolla Canyon near Grants, NM
- May 15-17............Rio Mora Wildlife Refuge
- June 19-21...........Midnight Meadows near Questa, NM
- July 17-19............Valles Caldera I
- August 14-16........Valles Caldera II
- September 11-13...Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns
- October 3.............Day project on Glorieta Mesa
- October 17...........Day project in the Sandia Mountains

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**AWF BOARD 2015**

**OFFICERS**
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Vice President – Kristina G. Fisher  
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Stephen Bohannon  
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Cameron Weber  
Bill Zeedyk
AWF volunteers enjoyed another spectacular weekend of restoration activities in Limestone Canyon in the San Mateo Mountains southwest of Socorro. We worked closely with Forest Service biologist Suzanne DeRosier to build structures that had been laid out by Bill Zeedyk. Most of the work was concentrated around a meadow where a remnant stand of narrowleaf cottonwood trees recently sprouted new seedlings thanks in part to AWF’s success in bringing up the streambed and keeping the meadows wetter. (Last year we built exclosures around several of those cottonwoods, and they are growing fast!) In the evening, we got a special treat as we sat around the campfire: listening to a diverse array of calls from a pair of nearby Mexican spotted owls. Hopefully our work will help keep their habitat healthy, and we can’t wait to return next year and pick up where we left off this time.

See lots more photos of this and other restoration projects at: abq.nmwildlife.org!
**UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST**

**Dedication Ceremony for the Valles Caldera**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2015, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

Valles Caldera National Preserve officially began a new era on October 1, when the National Park Service took over management of the 89,000-acre area. Jorge Silva-Bañuelos, a longtime staff member for former U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman and most recently executive director of the Valles Caldera Trust, has been named superintendent. To celebrate the change in management, the preserve is holding a formal ceremony with special guests Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, former U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman and other community leaders. Parking will be limited so car pool if you can, and plan to be there by 10:30 a.m.

**Celebrate Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge!**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2015**

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge covers an expanse of nearly 230,000 acres in New Mexico’s heartland. Because its primary focus is on research and education, public access to the refuge is limited. “Celebrate Sevilleta” is a terrific opportunity to experience New Mexico’s largest and most ecologically diverse refuge. This year, we’re offering an array of new tours, hands-on activities, live animals, intriguing demonstrations and exhibits, live music, a food truck, and more! For more information: [http://amigosdelasevilleta.org/](http://amigosdelasevilleta.org/)

**Construct a Naturalistic Bat Drinker at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2015, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**VOLUNTEERS FOR THE OUTDOORS, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge**

Because bears have been destroying the old-style drinkers and bats must drink on the wing over open water, this project will focus on constructing an approximately 12-foot-by-18-foot shallow rock and concrete naturalistic drinker. The gently sloped edges and greater surface area will encourage birds, reptiles and smaller mammals. For more info: [http://www.rei.com/events/nmvfo-work-project-sevilleta-nwr/la-joya/128393](http://www.rei.com/events/nmvfo-work-project-sevilleta-nwr/la-joya/128393)

**Aldo Leopold Foundation Writer-in-Residence Lecture: Tovar Cerulli**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**Harwood Museum, Taos, NM**

The Aldo Leopold Foundation hosts scholars and writers at Aldo and Estella Leopold’s first home surrounded by the Carson National Forest in New Mexico, which serves as a meaningful place to pursue one’s creative efforts in the physical and intellectual context of land ethics. The current resident, Tovar Cerulli, is a vegan-turned-hunter and author of *The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian’s Hunt for Sustenance*. Tovar believes deeply in the importance of respecting ecological systems and our fellow creatures. As a consultant and educator, he is devoted to fostering insight and building conservation alliances in which diverse views are valued. Tovar is currently researching Ojibwe and Euro-American hunters’ ways of talking about wolves in the western Great Lakes region. For more information: contact Chris Furr, cfurr@fs.fed.us.

Send your event information to: abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com!
UPCOMING CONFERENCES OF INTEREST

Water in the Desert: River & Wetland Restoration  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26 - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2015, Albuquerque, NM

Join CNM for a week in October 2015 for a rich and varied exploration of river, stream, and wetlands restoration projects in New Mexico. Our guides will be refuge managers, an acequia mayordomo, Pueblo representatives, biologists, ecologists, engineers, and public officials. Learn about your water; learn about your environment; learn about the future of New Mexico.

10/26/15: Hear representatives from Pueblo of Santa Ana, 3-4:30 p.m., City of Albuquerque Open Space, 4:45-5:45 p.m., & Pueblo of Sandia (AWF President Scial! 6-7:30 p.m. discuss riparian restoration.

10/27/15: Hear ecologists and refuge managers discuss riparian restoration in the Middle Rio Grande Bosque, 3-4:30pm, Bosque del Apache, 4:45-5:45 p.m., & Valle de Oro, 6-7:30 p.m.

10/28/15: Hear a Sevilleta biologist 3-4:30 p.m., a Pueblo of Santa Clara representative 4:45-5:45 p.m., and Navajo Nation representatives 6-7:30 p.m. discuss their restoration activities.

10/29/15: Two biologists will discuss Silvery Minnows 3-4:30 p.m., US Army Corps of Engineers projects will be presented 4:45-5:45 p.m., & information about New Mexico Acequias will be presented 6-7:30 p.m.

10/30/15 (8AM-6PM): Tour restoration sites along the Rio Grande.

For more information and the entire schedule of events:  
https://www.facebook.com/events/1078746812152892/

Register for this year’s Quivira Coalition Conference  
The Next Wave: Cultivating Abundance  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11 - FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2015, Albuquerque, NM

Plentiful, ample, bountiful, generous, fertile, rich, replete - these are words that describe both the attitude and the goals of the next wave of agrarians. In this conference, we will hear from ranchers, farmers, scientists, activists and others who are leading the next wave. We’ll look down the road with them and share their thoughts on how to flourish amidst the emerging conditions and challenges of the twenty-first century. This conference does sell out so please purchase your tickets soon! Speakers include Paul Hawken, Christine Jones, Scott Black, Breece Robertson and many more.

Conference Website: http://quiviracoalition.org/2015_Quivira_Conference/
The Albuquerque Wildlife Federation has survived and thrived for over a century thanks to the dedication and generosity of generations of members. We encourage you to join this proud legacy by becoming a contributing member and helping support AWF’s restoration service projects, monthly environmental education presentations, and other special events.

Along with becoming a member, you can support AWF’s work by purchasing one of our Valles Caldera commemorative T-shirts, designed by graphic artist and AWF board member Stephen Bohannon. It is printed on an organic cotton shirt and available in sizes S, M, L, & XL.

**Price: $20  Shipping: $5**

To order, mail in the form below or email your order to: abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com

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**AWF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Albuquerque Wildlife Federation | P.O. Box 20225 | Albuquerque, NM 87154

☐ Yes, I’d like to join AWF!  ☐ This is a gift membership from: ____________________________________________________________

ame(s): ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

address: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

city, state, zip: __________________________________________________________________________________________

phone: ___________________________ email: _________________________________________________________________

☐ Student (under 18) ___ $10  
☐ Individual ________ $25  
☐ Family ___________ $35  
☐ Sustaining ________ $50-99  
☐ Patron ____________ $100  
☐ Lifetime ____________ $500 (one-time payment)

Dues: $_________  
Extra Contribution: $_________  
T-shirt & Shipping: $_________  

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $_________