

THE PINE CONE

Official Newsletter of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation



Albuquerque
WILDLIFE
Federation

conservationists since 1914

July 2020

Rivers in a Time of Megadrought

At the beginning of this month, the City of Albuquerque stopped diverting surface water from the Rio Grande for its municipal drinking water system. If it hadn't done so, the stretch of the Rio that runs through the City would have gone dry. Already, about 30 miles of the Rio Grande south of Albuquerque have disappeared, leaving behind a sandy channel scattered with the bodies of dead fish.

What is particularly troubling about the river's peril this year is that New Mexico's winter snows were actually pretty good. Mountain snowpack was at normal levels during the 2019-2020 season—a far cry from 2018 when the slopes remained brown and barren, and we expected that the river run-off would suffer.

But as climate change heats and dries out the southwest, more of our snow sublimates—simply evaporates without ever melting into water—or is absorbed by dry soils before it can reach the river. The snow that remains melts faster and earlier, leaving little left to feed the rivers as spring turns into summer

In spite of a few good snow years, the past two decades have been the driest New Mexico has experienced since the 1500s. Scientists have said that we are currently in a “megadrought,” about half of which is due to the hotter temperatures of human-caused climate change.



The megadrought won't be letting up anytime soon. So it is up to us to find new ways to care for our rivers.

Along with supplying drinking water for Albuquerque and Santa Fe, the Rio Grande sustains endangered species like the Rio Grande silvery minnow, the Southwestern willow flycatcher, and the meadow jumping mouse. New Mexico's riparian areas are essential habitat for 80% of our wildlife in this water-scarce land.

If we want our rivers to continue flowing and nurturing this rich web of life, we must make hard choices, including curtailing our own water consumption and reducing our contributions to climate change. Both Albuquerque and Santa Fe have made great strides toward reducing their water use per capita, and the state of New Mexico has committed to achieving 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045.

But the rapidly drying Rio demonstrates that more is needed, urgently. We must continue working to transform our lives in ways that will keep our rivers running in this hotter, drier world. For a thoughtful analysis of what we are facing and what we can do, check out the “[Our Land](#)” video series with Laura Paskus, as well as her new book, *At the Precipice*.

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Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Secretary

JULY 17-19, 2020 RESTORATION SERVICE PROJECT: Valle Vidal

IMPORTANT: This project is subject to change or cancellation based on the public health restrictions in effect in mid-July. If you RSVP to attend, we will keep you updated about the project status.

Good news: AWF's board has developed [Covid-19 safety protocols](#) for running our restoration projects in this changed world, and we have received approval from the Forest Service to proceed with the Valle Vidal project this month!

But here's the catch: the only way we can hold this project – or others later in the year – is if you help us do it as safely as possible.

This project will look different than AWF projects have in the past: the number of people working together on a rock structure will be strictly limited, volunteers will need to wear face coverings when they're working near anyone else, and there will be no potluck or communal food. [Please review our full Covid-19 safety protocols to familiarize yourself with all the details.](#)

We know many of you are as eager as we are to resume our work of ecological restoration, and we look forward to running a safe and productive volunteer project.



PROJECT DETAILS

LOCATION: Valle Vidal in northern New Mexico

THE PROJECT: AWF was the first organization to undertake restoration work in the Valle Vidal, and we organized projects there from 1980-2009, returning in 2019 for the first time in a decade. This year, we'll continue the work we began last year repairing one-rock dams and other riparian restoration structures in the Ring Place meadow. We may also continue work repairing the wetland enclosure fence.

SCHEDULE: Friday, July 17 – Sunday, July 19

Volunteers are welcome to join us just for the work day Saturday, or camp for just one of the two nights.

GEAR: Bring everything you need for a weekend of camping. Bring your own face mask or bandana. For the work, don't forget work gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. We recommend bringing a change of shoes, and waterproof boots or boots you don't mind getting wet. Rain gear, warm clothes for the evenings and plenty of water are essential.

FOOD: AWF is still planning provide breakfast burritos on Saturday morning and bison or veggie burgers on Saturday evening. This food will be provided as single serving portions: there will be no potluck or communal food-sharing. Please bring lots of water and your own food for Friday and Saturday dinner, Saturday and Sunday lunch, and Sunday breakfast.

TO SIGN UP: Contact Scial at rioscial@gmail.com

Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.

AWF's Wilderness First Aid Course has been rescheduled for November 14, 2020. To sign up, email HSC-IMMC@salud.unm.edu.

WFA Wilderness First Aid Certification Course

Want to know how to handle common emergencies in the backcountry setting? This introductory level course will teach students how to recognize and manage a variety of emergencies in the wilderness setting. No previous training required.

2 year certification
16 hour course (8 hours online & 8 hour practical session)
Practical session held on November 14, 2020
Course cost \$240

Register by Email
HSC-IMMC@salud.unm.edu



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

International Mountain Medicine Center | Department of Emergency Medicine

2020 SERVICE PROJECTS CALENDAR

March 7.....Day project at Valle de Oro

July 17-19.....Valle Vidal

August 21-23.....Midnight Meadows near Questa, NM

September 4-6.....Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns

September 18-20.....Wolf Creek, Ft. Union Ranch, NM

TBD.....Jemez Mountains

October 24.....Day project at Cedro Creek

AWF BOARD 2020

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ACTION ALERT & UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Action Alert: Speak Up For Migratory Birds by July 20!



When Aldo Leopold founded AWF 106 years ago, one of the young organization's first campaigns was to lobby for the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, one of the nation's first environmental laws. Since then, the law has saved the lives of millions, perhaps billions, of birds. Now the U.S. Department of the Interior is attempting to roll back those protections, allowing corporations to kill birds with impunity. [Click here to read more about the proposed changes](#), and then submit your comments opposing them by July 20, 2020.

[Click here to submit a comment through the Audubon Society's website](#)

[Click here to write your own comment directly on Regulations.gov](#)

Wildlife Wednesdays: Dr. Kerry Mower on Wildlife Diseases in New Mexico

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 5:30 P.M.

NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Watch a presentation by Dr. Kerry Mower, animal health specialist with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, on wildlife diseases in New Mexico. Dr. Mower has been tracking chronic wasting disease since it first turned up in some southern New Mexico herds in 2002. These days, he also has been tracking the recent outbreak of rabbit hemorrhagic fever and serves on a state/federal task force on the lookout for signs that the coronavirus now sweeping the world as a global pandemic is spreading to wildlife populations.

For more info on how to watch the presentation:

<https://nmwildlife.org/new-mexico-expert-to-discuss-chronic-wasting-and-other-wildlife-diseases/>

La Mancha Wetland Restoration Project, Las Cruces

SOUTHWEST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 8:00-11:30 am

Help remove invasive species and improve trails in the La Mancha Wetland along the Rio Grande River! Volunteers are needed to relocate concrete, assist with erosion control, water plants, and pull weeds. La Mancha is a wildlife sanctuary that provides habitats for many native and migratory species; volunteers make this space available for people to view and appreciate the abundant wildlife. For more info and to sign up:

<https://www.wildmesquite.org/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=55>



Send your event information to: abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com!

JOIN US!

Become a Member of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation

The Albuquerque Wildlife Federation is an all-volunteer organization founded by Aldo Leopold and dedicated to protecting and restoring New Mexico's wildlife and habitat resources.

Our work is only possible thanks to the generous support of our members.

If you like the work we do, we hope you will help keep this legacy going by becoming a member or renewing your membership.



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: _____

name(s): _____

address: _____

city, state, zip: _____

phone: _____ email: _____

- Student _____ \$10
- Individual _____ \$25
- Family _____ \$35
- Sustaining _____ \$50-99
- Patron _____ \$100
- Lifetime _____ \$500 (*one-time payment*)

Dues: \$ _____

Extra Contribution: \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____