

THE PINE CONE

Official Newsletter of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation



Albuquerque
WILDLIFE
Federation

conservationists since 1914

March 2024

Caja del Rio in the Crosshairs

A decade ago, thousands of New Mexicans successfully organized to block the development of a gravel strip mine on the Caja del Rio plateau, which sits atop the La Bajada volcanic escarpment.

Now this unique place is facing a new threat: the National Nuclear Security Administration is proposing to install a 14-mile transmission line that would slice across the plateau to bring additional power to Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The Caja del Rio consists of just over 107,000 acres of land dominated by piñon-juniper woodlands and managed primarily by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. It contains dramatic and well-loved features like Diablo Canyon, Tétilla Peak, and the La Cieneguilla petroglyph site (which was sadly vandalized with graffiti last year). The area is biologically and culturally rich, providing a critical wildlife corridor along the Rio Grande and supporting habitat for species ranging from elk to burrowing owls.

The Caja del Rio is home to sites that are sacred to the tribal nations who have lived on this landscape since time immemorial. It also holds a long history of Spanish settlement, including communities that date back more than 13 generations and visible traces of the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, which was the main route of travel between Mexico and northern New Mexico during the 1500s and 1600s.



The cultural, recreational, and ecological values of the Caja del Rio are spurring the public to come to its defense, just as they did a decade ago. A community meeting about the proposed transmission line last month was packed with stakeholders who fiercely opposed the project, ranging from Pueblo leadership to environmental activists to local community members who hike and hunt on the Caja.

Long-term, we must do more than simply stopping each threat one by one. The Caja Coalition, consisting of Pueblo leaders, community stakeholders, local businesses, cultural and environmental conservation groups, outdoor recreation advocates, and many more New Mexicans, is advocating that the Caja del Rio be permanently protected, such as by designating it as a national monument. This would not only help prevent major destructive developments like strip mines and high-voltage power lines, but would provide additional tools to combat the ongoing, pernicious degradation caused by activities like illegal dumping, unregulated shooting, and destructive off-road vehicle use.

To learn more and sign up for updates from the Caja Coalition, visit: <https://cajadelrio.org/>

Inside this Issue:

March Restoration Project.....	pg 2
Map of 2024 Restoration Projects.....	pg 3
Events of Interest.....	pg 4
Membership Form.....	pg 5

Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Secretary

MARCH 9, 2024 SERVICE PROJECT: Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge

LOCATION: Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge in the South Valley of Albuquerque

THE PROJECT: Join AWF for our first volunteer project of the 2024 season! We will be partnering with Rio Grande Return, Friends of the Valle de Oro, and students from Atrisco Heritage Academy High School, among others. Valle de Oro was once a working dairy farm, and it is now one of the nation’s first urban wildlife refuges. Volunteers have helped advance its transformation from farm fields to a refuge for an amazing array of birds and wildlife, an innovative site for wetlands restoration using stormwater run-off, and a resource for the local community.

During this year’s project, volunteers will be hand-seeding and raking in grass seeds, watering past plantings, removing weeds, and assisting with various other needs around the refuge. **(If you have a spare bucket or shovel, please bring them!** We’ll have tape and markers available to mark your tools so you don’t lose them.) We look forward to having you join us!

SCHEDULE: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 9

GEAR: For this project, you will need gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. Wear layers as the day may start off cool and warm up later.

FOOD: Please bring snacks, your own lunch, and plenty of water.

TO SIGN UP: Contact Cameron at cameron.weber@gmail.com
Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.



2024 SERVICE PROJECTS CALENDAR

- March 9.....Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge
- TBD Day Project.....Chelenzo Farms, Cerrillos
- April 12-14.....Wolf Creek, Ft. Union Ranch
- May 17-19.....Rio Mora Wildlife Refuge
- May 31-June 2.....Rito Peñas Negras
- June 21-23.....San Antonio Creek, Jemez Mtns
- July 19-21.....Gallinas Post-Fire Restoration
- August 9-11.....Midnight Meadows near Questa, NM
- August 30-Sept 1.....Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns
- October 4-6.....Cebolla Canyon, El Malpais
- October 26.....Cedro Creek, Tijeras

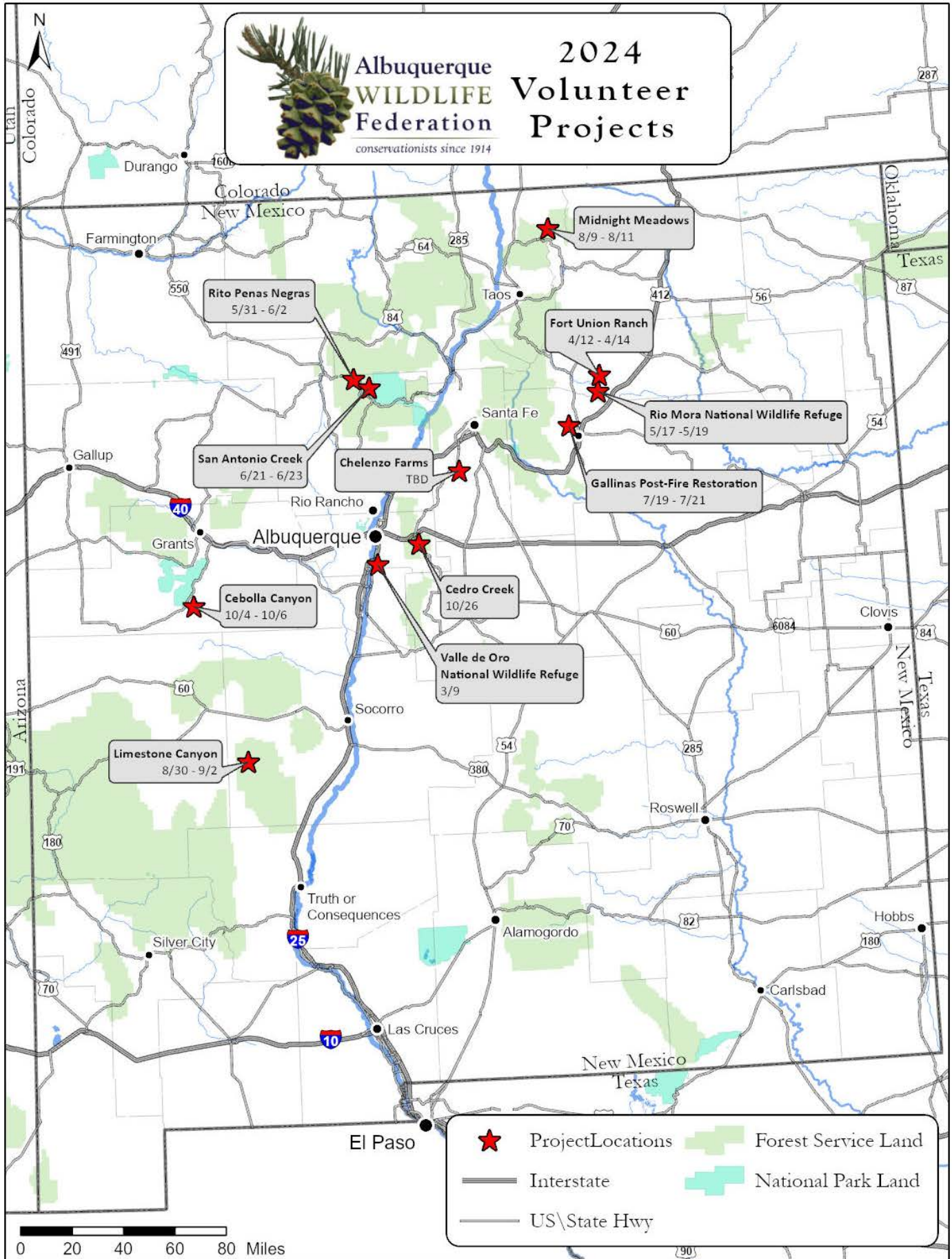
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UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST



Leopold Week 2024: Natural, Wild, and Free

MARCH 1-8, eight free virtual speaker sessions

“Perhaps such a shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined in terms of things natural, wild and free.”

Aldo Leopold ended the foreword to *A Sand County Almanac* with this quote in March of 1948. His collection of essays reveals what “natural, wild, and free” meant to him back then. But what does it mean to us today? Join

the Aldo Leopold Foundation for eight virtual lectures on March 1-8, 2024 to explore this question and discover how you can more deeply connect to the land community. (Includes a lecture on the Gila Wilderness at 6:00 pm on March 6!) For more info and to register: <https://www.crowdcast.io/c/leopoldweek24>

2024 Land and Water Summit

MARCH 6-8, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque

As climate change continues to impact land and water resources, there is a pressing need to adapt and plan our local and regional projects accordingly. The challenges we are experiencing in arid lands require us to develop innovative methods of adapting existing systems. These efforts aim to mitigate potentially disastrous repercussions and ensure the preservation and sustainability of our way of life in desert regions. The 2024 Land and Water Summit features speakers who share their expertise on upgrading, retooling, adapting, and innovating systems to safeguard our land and water resources.

For more info and to register: <https://www.landandwatersummitnm.org/>



Banff Mountain Film Festival

MARCH 11-12, Lensic Theater, Santa Fe

SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST

Stand on the highest peaks, ski the steepest slopes, and be a part of the gripping adventures waiting for you in this year’s Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour! Come both nights and watch two different lineups of the best in mountain and adventure films from around the globe – curated just for Santa Fe! To purchase tickets: <https://sfct.org/events/banff-mountain-film-festival/>

Southwest Seed Partnership Annual Stakeholder Meeting

MARCH 20, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., online

The Southwest Seed Partnership (SWSP) is a collaborative group working towards increasing the supply of locally sourced and diverse native seed for ecological restoration in Arizona and New Mexico. At this meeting, we will provide detailed updates on the SWSP, including results from our “Southwest Regional Seed User Survey.” We will also highlight seed collection, production, and restoration efforts taking place in our region.

For more info and to RSVP: <https://southwestseedpartnership.org/stakeholdermeeting2024>

Water Wisdom for Santa Fe

MARCH 30, 2:00-3:30 p.m., Southside Library in Santa Fe (6599 Jaguar Road)

Join us for an exploration of community resilience in hotter, drier times, and how each of us can conserve our precious water resources. We will learn about rain gardens and the problems they can solve. We will also get an overview of our local watershed. Native seeds, rebates, and lots of planting resources will be available!

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: \$ _____