



# Summer Report

## Keeping a New Mexico landmark safe

### Rallying support to save the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

The jagged peaks of the Organ Mountains are a spectacular backdrop to Las Cruces and have some of the best hiking in the state. But the sprawl of Las Cruces is coming too close for comfort, and development is quickly encroaching on this unique landscape. Environment New Mexico is working to permanently protect more than 600,000 acres of this iconic desert terrain.

We're talking to thousands of New Mexicans face-to-face throughout the summer about the importance of protecting the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks from the threat of development. Whether or not we're from Las Cruces, the beauty, rich cultural history, and diverse wildlife found in the Organ Mountains remind us why this is such an important place to protect.

#### Obama: Protect this state treasure

President Obama has the power under the Antiquities Act to designate areas of extreme ecological or historical significance as national monuments, and the Organ Mountains certainly have both. Thousands of Environment New Mexico supporters around the state are sending postcards to President Obama, urging him to permanently protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks by designating them a national monument.

We're also building a broad, statewide community of businesses and organizations who want to see the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks protected.



Dolor Ipsum

▲ *The Organ Mountains*

#### At risk: History and diverse wildlife

Until the president acts, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks are at risk of encroaching development and mining threats. This would have devastating effects on the wide variety of plant and animal species who call the Organ Mountains home, including two state-endangered cacti species and multiple at-risk animal species like the bald eagle and peregrine falcon.

The Organ Mountains are rich with more than 10,000 years' worth of archaeological and cultural artifacts, including cave inscriptions from Billy the Kid and training sites for the Apollo Space Mission. We're fighting hard to ensure permanent protection for this rugged landscape, keeping the beauty, history and biological diversity safe for future generations of New Mexicans to enjoy.



Andrew Price

#### more inside

*Rio Grande del Norte gets permanent protection; Keeping fracking away from Otero Mesa; Interview with Sen. Martin Heinrich, and more.*



## To our members

As the summer gets under way, I am excited to work with our young and enthusiastic canvassers. These individuals who work with us each summer are excited to help protect New Mexico's environment and get more people like yourself involved in our work.

I see a bit of myself in many of them. When I was a college student, all I wanted to do was protect the environment that I loved. I knew that I couldn't do it alone, but I didn't find the opportunity to work with Environment New Mexico until later.

It's a source of pride to see so many young people excited to talk to New Mexicans, like yourself, every day about pertinent environmental issues. And we couldn't win so many victories if it weren't for your support. We need New Mexicans from all walks of life, all across the state, to protect our environment.

Thanks for all you do,

Sanders Moore  
Director



## Toward a greener future

Environment New Mexico and Environment New Mexico Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentNewMexico.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentNewMexico.org).

eqqman/Shutterstock

## Recent action

### Rio Grande del Norte gets permanent protection

President Obama permanently protected a pristine region known as Rio Grande del Norte near Taos by designating the area a national monument. This region is known for diverse wildlife and incredible mountain scenery.

"Environment New Mexico applauds President Obama for listening to New Mexicans and protecting one of the most treasured wild areas of our state," said Sanders Moore, director of Environment New Mexico. "This is great news for the hikers who explore Ute Mountain, a free-standing former volcano, and for the critical populations of bald eagles and other wildlife who call this area their home."

Rio Grande del Norte is home to thousands of plants and wildlife. The region is home to bald eagles and falcons; migratory birds, such as herons and merlins; elk and pronghorn antelope, the only surviving species of its family in the world. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, former Sen. Jeff Bingaman and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, and the mayors of Questa and Taos all support the project and expressed their support to President Obama.

"Rio Grande del Norte is just another reason why New Mexico is known as the 'Land of Enchantment,'" said Moore. "Thanks to President Obama, we'll be able to enjoy this region for generations to come."

### Otero Mesa fracking put on hold

In recent months, Otero Mesa has been under attack. The Las Cruces office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved a natural gas drilling permit to utilize an open waste pit for their drilling waste at Otero Mesa, which is against New Mexico state law. Environment New Mexico members and activists spoke up and told New Mexico BLM State Director Jesse Juen to uphold the law, and he listened. He sent the proposal back to the Las Cruces office for further analysis and to create a new plan. The process could take another year, and we look forward to continuing the fight for this wild grassland every step of the way.



▲ Rio Grande Gorge

Dustin Spengler

# Getting our special places funding they deserve

Angi English

Special places across New Mexico, like Chaco Culture National Historical Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, are permanently protected from development and destruction, thanks to support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). But unless Congress and President Obama take action, the LWCF will continue to be raided year after year, and places in our state and across the country will continue to be threatened, instead of cherished and preserved.

Environment New Mexico has created a coalition of supporters calling on the president to provide full LWCF funding. We also held an event with the media to release a list of reasons why special places in New Mexico should be protected.

“Year after year, this critical fund has been cut, and year after year, we watch special places in our state and across the country get left unprotected,” said Rikki Seguin, field organizer. “Here in New Mexico, we are fortunate enough to have so many places dripping with important history and rare ecology, and we need to make sure these places stay as they are for future generations.”

## 50 years ago

Fifty years ago, on Feb. 14, 1963, President John F. Kennedy took action to keep places like Bandelier National Monument and the Cibola National Forest safe from overdevelopment and pollution by creating the LWCF. This program sets aside a small portion of revenues the federal government receives from offshore oil drilling royalties and makes these funds available to protect and expand parks, wildlife refuges, forests and recreation areas.

New Mexico has received approximately \$229 million from the LWCF over the past 50 years, protecting over 25 special places across the state. But funding is running out, and we need Congress to act quickly.

## 44 signatures on our letter

In its 50-year history, the LWCF has only

ever been fully funded one time. We see Congress divert the funds to other purposes, leaving our land and water at risk. We worked to build a diverse group of supporters, calling on President Obama to put full, permanent and dedicated funding to the LWCF in his 2014 budget. Forty-four state legislators, local elected officials and organizations signed onto our letter to President Obama calling for full funding.

Right now, several beautiful places in New Mexico are at risk of development. Two such places, Miranda Canyon and Price’s Dairy, need additional funding from the LWCF in order to be fully protected.

On the first day of spring, Art De La Cruz, Bernalillo County Dist. 2 Commissioner, and the Trust for Public Land’s Greg Hiner joined us to unveil a list of the top 10 reasons special places across New Mexico deserve protection from development. Our list touches on economic, biological and cultural reasons for protecting these places.

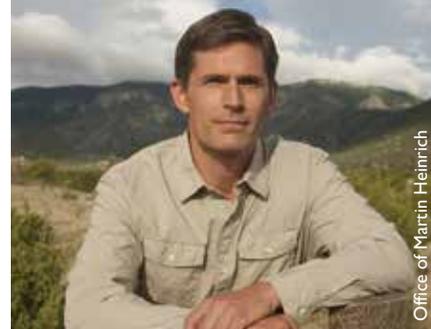
“Protecting important places is one of the reasons why Environment New Mexico exists,” said Seguin. “And in order to be successful, we need the LWCF behind us.”



Nix BC

## research

Read our “*Top 10 Reasons Why Special Places Across New Mexico Deserve Protection*” at [www.EnvironmentNewMexico.org](http://www.EnvironmentNewMexico.org)



Office of Martin Heinrich

## STANDING UP FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT Sen. Martin Heinrich

*What are your top three environmental priorities?*

Our state has the second largest solar energy potential in the nation and ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in wind energy potential. My top priority is advancing energy and climate security policies that promote economic growth, accelerate job creation, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and drive clean energy manufacturing.

Additionally, the completion of the cleanup of Los Alamos is an important commitment that Congress and the Department of Energy (DOE) have made to the community and the state of New Mexico, and that should remain a top funding priority for DOE.

Finally, I remain deeply committed to protecting our nation’s land and water. In New Mexico, families have long histories of using public lands for hiking, hunting, fishing and other traditions, both new and old.

As Teddy Roosevelt put it in 1912, “We do not intend that our natural resources shall be exploited by the few against the interests of the many ... for our aim is to preserve our natural resources for the public as a whole, for the average man and the average woman who make up the body of the American people.”

I couldn’t agree more.

PO Box 40173  
Albuquerque, NM 87196  
Phone (505) 254-4819

# Environment New Mexico

Address service requested

NON-PROFIT  
ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
BROCKTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 430



## Summer Report

VOLUME 8 | NO. 1 | 2013

James Michael Hill

## Environment New Mexico

### Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment New Mexico. We focus exclusively on protecting New Mexico's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

## On the path to 100,000 solar roofs

New Mexico is fortunate to have an abundance of energy sources. And in fact, we are the second sunniest state in the country. Unfortunately, we still get almost 90 percent of our electricity from dirty and dangerous sources like coal, and only 2 percent of our electricity comes from the sun. So Environment New Mexico has set a goal to get 10 percent of our energy, or the equivalent of 100,000 roofs, from the sun.

Thanks to support from members like you, we are making progress. Over 50 businesses across the state have already signed onto our campaign to get more energy from the sun. We have gotten thousands of petitions signed to urge PNM to approve "community solar" projects so that more people can invest in solar. And we're talking to key decision makers across the state to get them involved in our campaign.



### more online

For more information on our work to put up 100,000 solar roofs by 2020 and support community solar projects, visit: [EnvironmentNewMexico.org](http://EnvironmentNewMexico.org) or follow us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/EnvNM](https://www.facebook.com/EnvNM)