



Fall Report

Momentum builds to save Organ Mountains

Standing up for an ecological and cultural icon

This spring, we kicked off our campaign to protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, and in the past few months, we quickly discovered that New Mexicans across the state want to see this incredible place protected from rare earth mineral mining and destructive sprawl.

Our next national monument

Our outreach team hit the streets to talk to people in Las Cruces and other cities throughout the Land of Enchantment about why we want to make the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks the next national monument in New Mexico. The team had more than 15,000 face-to-face conversations about the threats currently facing this unique place. More than 5,000 have signed our petition to President Obama to protect the mountains and surrounding areas.

The Organ Mountains are the steepest mountain range in New Mexico and are home to golden eagles and mountain lions. The surrounding Desert Peaks area is home to bald eagles and rare cacti. In addition to the ecological wonders of the area, there are numerous archeological and cultural sites worth protecting, including prehistoric dwellings and the earliest known cultivated corn in the U.S.

“These mountains are an incredible backdrop to Las Cruces and part of our history as a state,” said Director Sanders Moore. “It’s vital that we keep this place free from anything that threatens to change the beauty, history and ecological value of those towering peaks.”



Staff

▲ Environment New Mexico collected more than 100 photo petitions to show support for our special places, including the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

An invitation to Sally Jewell

In June, Moore traveled to Washington, D.C., to share a video we made inviting Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to visit the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and experience firsthand why we want to protect this place and the dangers it faces. The video highlights children and families from around New Mexico.

Hundreds of our members also sent their own personal invitations to her.

“We’re feeling confident that the actions we’ve recently taken will result in real progress for the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks,” said Moore. “At this rate, with your help, we’ll reach our goal in no time.”



Flickr user: cobalt123

take action

To take action to protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks from development, visit: www.EnvironmentNewMexico.org.

◀ Home to at-risk plant and animal species like the night-blooming cereus



To our members

As director of an organization like this one, with big goals of protecting New Mexico's environment, it's hard to slow down. As soon as one campaign goal is achieved, there's another behind it.

And because of this, sometimes it's hard to reflect on all we've been able to accomplish. But while working with my staff to write this newsletter to you, it's clear that the last few months have been huge for us.

In particular, being a part of the campaign to permanently protect Rio Grande del Norte was amazing and all of the progress we've made toward seeing the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks get the same protection is really encouraging. And recent developments in our solar campaign in Santa Fe have put us right where we want to be.

So I just want to say thank you, and as you read this newsletter, I hope you feel as much of a sense of accomplishment as I do. I look forward to more victories with you at our side. Thanks.

Sanders Moore
State Director

Recent action

No time for cutting back on energy efficiency

When the House Energy and Commerce hearing on the Department of Energy's budget took place, Sanders Moore, director of Environment New Mexico, released a statement advocating for funding two important energy efficiency programs. According to Moore, the Weatherization Assistance and State Energy Programs help many families and are a step in the right direction in the plan to tackle global warming. However, in the past year, Congress has slashed both budgets.

The Weatherization Assistance Program helps low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities make energy efficiency improvements to their homes. The State Energy Program (SEP) provides financial and technical assistance to states for developing strategies to address their energy priorities and adopt energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. SEP also saves \$256 million annually in reduced energy bills.

"Clean energy and energy efficiency programs are vital global warming solutions we need right now," said Moore. "We're counting on Congress to protect and strengthen these programs, and in so doing, also protect our health and the environment."

Otero Mesa Management Plan not strong enough

Environment New Mexico generated hundreds of public comments on the Resource Management Plan that includes Otero Mesa and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. The plan as introduced was weak because it allowed the most critically sensitive areas to be developed for gas drilling and mining. These areas include precious wildlife species and culturally-significant sites.

Otero Mesa is ripe with these areas. It is the last wild Chihuahuan grassland in the United States, home to mountain lions, prairie dogs, and pronghorn antelope, and sits above the state's last untapped groundwater source. Instead of drilling and mining these resources away, we should make sure we protect them for future generations by permanently protecting the area.

We are currently waiting for the next draft of the Resource Management Plan, which will hopefully be much stronger and protect one of New Mexico's most special places.

The climate is changing – are your investments?

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▲ Pronghorn antelope near drilling rigs

What President Obama's climate plan means for New Mexico

On June 25, President Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency and increase the nation's commitment to renewable energy. In the midst of record drought and wildfires in New Mexico and other states, the president's plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Environment New Mexico and many others.

"All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or simply worried about what's in store for our kids, can take comfort in knowing that President Obama has put the nation on a path toward a cleaner, healthier and safer future," said Sanders Moore, Environment New Mexico director.

More heat waves, wildfires, drought

Left unchecked, global warming is projected bring to New Mexico more extreme heat waves, drought, and wildfires. Scientists have warned that the window is rapidly closing for making the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming. The president's plan will:

- **Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants.** The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which currently lack any such federal limits, despite being the largest single-source of the carbon pollution fueling global warming.
- **Invest in energy efficiency.** New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.
- **Build more renewable energy.** The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar.

- **Support affected communities.** The president's plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.
- **Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally.** The president's plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

Focus on carbon pollution

Environment New Mexico offered special praise for the president's pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. More than 3.2 million Americans submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

"Carbon pollution from power plants is a huge part of the global warming problem. President Obama acknowledged this and mapped out a plan for cleaning up this pollution," said Moore. "We also know that this plan is just one important step in a multi-year effort, and that the proof of the plan's success will be in the pudding."



Daniel Borman/Creative Commons

more online

To learn more about our work to curb global warming, visit:
www.EnvironmentNewMexico.org

▲ *President Obama speaks to a group of students about the need for alternative energies.*



Catch up with a canvass director

We recently sat down with Stephen Rouse, one of our canvass directors, to talk about his work directing our citizen outreach project to Save the Organ Mountains. We're happy to introduce to you one of our staff making a big difference for New Mexico's environment!

What are your favorite things about directing?

I really like connecting with strangers on issues that I care about. I'm very concerned about the state of our world, and when I'm talking to someone about environmental issues, I see a mutual respect and admiration about working together to solve these problems.

I am able to educate thousands of people in a year about protecting the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks from development and mining or about increasing the amount of solar energy we have in New Mexico. I really like recruiting and training the next generation of activists and instilling in them the same values I share about protecting our environment and making an impact.

Why do you like directing in New Mexico?

New Mexico is diverse, there are very friendly people here, and we have some of the best environments in the country to protect, such as the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

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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.

New Mexico ranks 5th in nation for solar power

The Environment New Mexico Research & Policy Center recently released "Lighting the Way: What We Can Learn from America's Top 12 Solar States," a new report highlighting a solar energy boom across the country.

The report ranks New Mexico fifth in the nation per capita for solar installations. This makes New Mexico one of a dozen states that have led the nation in solar energy with supportive policies and a commitment to continued expansion. Last year, solar capacity in New Mexico grew by 12 percent, bringing it to a total of 190 megawatts.

"The sky's the limit on solar energy," said Sanders Moore, director of Environment New Mexico Research & Policy Center. "New Mexico's progress should make us confident that we can do much more. Our message is clear: If we want our state to be a leader in pollution-free solar energy, we have to set big goals and get good policies on the books."



more inside

Working to make the Organ Mountains a national monument; Drilling still a threat to Otero Mesa, and more.

◀ *Solar carport at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque*