



Preserving the Land of Enchantment

From Otero Mesa to Santa Fe National Forest

Environment New Mexico took action this summer to protect the “enchanted” places that make our state unique.

Our campaign to protect Otero Mesa from hard rock mining and gas drilling gained significant momentum.

By summer’s end, we had educated more than 40,000 New Mexicans about the potential threats to this unique home to 1,000 native wildlife species.

Declaring a new national monument

This summer, hundreds of New Mexico residents, business owners and local officials signed postcards and online petitions urging President Obama to declare Otero Mesa a national monument—and ensure this place gets the protection it deserves.

In August, we also released “Trashing Our Treasures,” a report highlighting the features of the Santa Fe National Forest and the Gila National Forest. This report discusses the economic benefits of protecting national forests and some of the threats posed to them.

For example, the so-called Conservation and Economic Growth Act (H.R. 2578) would waive more than a dozen environmental laws within 100 miles of the Mexican border—allowing vehicles, road and fence construction, and tree removal in wilderness areas, without giving any notice to the public.



Flickr User: mchilemon

▲ pronghorn antelope

We’ve got them covered

Throughout the summer, we also wrote and published opinion pieces for newspapers and other media outlets across New Mexico explaining the importance of protecting places like the Organ Mountains near Las Cruces and El Rio Grande del Norte in the northern part of the state.

As a supporter of Environment New Mexico, you know and appreciate the many unique features across this state.

We do, too. Our work will continue to ensure that the state’s nickname, “Land of Enchantment,” is timeless.

“New Mexico has many beloved places that make the Land of Enchantment so unique,” said Sanders Moore, state director of Environment New Mexico. “Places like Otero Mesa helped give the state its nickname, and it would be a shame to see them destroyed.”

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more inside

Environment New Mexico supporters fight to keep waste out of groundwater by protecting Pit Rule; U.S. Senators vote for first-ever limits on mercury pollution from power plants, and more.



To our members

I am happy to report that we've recently won some important victories for the environment. Even as Congress attempted to weaken important clean air and water standards and other safeguards, our members, citizens and state officials stood together to stand up to these attacks.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently implemented limits to reduce mercury, toxics and carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants and restored protections to the Clean Water Act. Not only will these standards improve our environment, they will improve our health. The mercury standard will help save 11,000 lives a year. Sens. Tom Udall and Jeff Bingaman voted to approve these important protections. At the time of print, these standards were upheld and we can breathe a little easier.

Thank you for your support,

Sanders Moore
Director

Recent action

Protections bring relief from fracking pollution

Controversial drilling operations will emit less dangerous air pollution under new national standards announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in April—an important first step in addressing the risks associated with hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

This move earned praise from Environment New Mexico. The EPA's new protections will require the industry to reduce dangerous air pollution from its gas extraction operations. These operations are a significant source of air pollution—including cancer-causing benzene, toxic chemicals linked to acute health problems and smog-forming pollution.

But while this certainly was a victory in the fight to curb air pollution from fracking, it is still just the beginning. Air pollution is not the only problem posed by gas drilling. Toxic fluids and contaminated wastewater have ended up in drinking water sources. The practice is also turning scenic landscapes into toxic, industrial wastelands.

Keeping waste out of groundwater

Environment New Mexico responded strongly to hearings that sought to overturn the New Mexico Pit Rule. Gov. Susana Martinez moved to overturn this rule through a round of hearings throughout the summer. In response, we submitted hundreds of public comments from members and supporters to keep the protections in place.

The rule was created by the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division in 2008 to prevent the seepage of waste from oil and gas drilling from contaminating soil and groundwater by closing certain systems and lining pits.

Before the Pit Rule was created, New Mexico experienced nearly 400 incidents of groundwater contamination linked to oil and gas waste. Since the rule was enacted, the number of contamination incidents has decreased to zero. We know the value of this rule, and we'll work to ensure it keeps our groundwater safe.



▲ New Mexico Pit Rule will help to keep our groundwater clean.

New actions to clear the air

In a victory for New Mexicans' health and environment, the U.S. Senate recently rejected a bill that would have allowed power plants to continue spewing toxic mercury pollution into our air. The bill, introduced by Sen. James Inhofe (Okla.), would have put up to 11,000 American lives at risk every year. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall both voted against this dangerous proposal.

Historic limits set

The defeated legislation sought to block the Environmental Protection Agency's recently finalized Mercury and Air Toxics Standard, which requires power plants to reduce their mercury pollution by 90 percent—the first-ever nationwide standard for mercury pollution from power plants, despite power plants being the largest single source of mercury pollution.

In 2010, New Mexico power plants emitted 489 pounds of toxic mercury into our air. This mercury pollution threatens our air, water and health. In fact, just one gram of mercury is enough to make the fish in a 25-acre lake unsafe to eat.

“Sens. Bingaman and Udall stood up for New Mexicans' health and our environment by rejecting this reckless attempt to allow more toxic mercury pollution in our air,” said Sam Feigenbaum, an organizer with Environment New Mexico.

Decreasing pollution by 630,000 tons

In addition to setting nationwide mercury standards, the U.S. is making moves to support clean cars—another victory for our health and air.

Recent research by the Center for Automotive Research shows that more than 460,000 drivers in New Mexico and other states could purchase their first plug-in vehicle within the next three years.

These plug-in vehicles would reduce our country's global warming pollution by approximately 630,000 metric tons per year, according to “Charging Forward:

The Emergence of Electric Vehicles and Their Role in Reducing Oil Consumption,” a report released by Environment America Research & Policy Center in July. If the plug-in vehicles were powered by clean sources of electricity, these savings would rise to nearly 2 million metric tons annually.

President Obama has proposed fuel efficiency and carbon pollution standards for new vehicles in model years 2017-2025. Environment New Mexico credits these standards as being the most important step ever taken to build clean, advanced technology cars that will get us off oil. His administration has also made investments in critical technologies, such as advanced batteries and high-powered charging stations.

With the right policies in place, plug-in vehicles can reduce America's dependence on oil by nearly 111 million gallons per year.

“The New Mexico Clean Cars program has helped ensure that drivers have a choice between vehicles powered by oil and advanced, high-tech vehicles that can be powered by clean energy,” said Sanders Moore, state director.



research

Charging Forward

The Emergence of Electric Vehicles and Reducing Oil Consumption

Read the full report online at EnvironmentNewMexicoCenter.org

2012 Elections

Environment New Mexico supports environmental defenders

With the November elections right around the corner, Environment New Mexico announced our endorsements for two candidates who have worked tirelessly to protect our environment. Barack Obama for President and Martin Heinrich for the U.S. Senate both deserve our strong support.

With the help of real champions in Congress and the White House we have seen real progress for our environment over the last four years, including the first increase in fuel efficiency in 23 years, new pollution standards that will reduce mercury, soot, and smog pollution from power plants and could save 46,000 lives a year, and a doubling of our nation's production of clean energy like wind and solar.

However, in an election already overrun with the influence of Big Oil and their allies, we need to make sure that we keep that progress moving forward.

Now is the moment where we can do that, and keep America moving forward to cleaner air and water, protection for our natural environment and a new clean energy economy.

To learn more about who Environment New Mexico endorsed in your community—and to share our endorsements with friends and family—visit our website at EnvironmentNewMexico.org/2012endorsements.

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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.

A new sunshine state

Environment New Mexico has been working to encourage the use of one of the state's most abundant resources—sunshine.

With a vision of getting 10 percent of our total electricity from the sun by 2030, our state can lead the way in this clean energy technology. The addition of more solar energy into our state would mean a reduction in greenhouse gases, as well as more new jobs, because installing solar panels is one job that can't be outsourced.

Environment New Mexico is setting out to show our decision-makers that New Mexicans want to utilize the power of the sun. We'll push to implement new policies that reduce barriers to and increase incentives for solar.



Dept. of Energy, NREL

more online



For more updates on our work to bring clean energy to New Mexico, visit:
www.EnvironmentNewMexico.org
or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/EnviroNM