

Report of the Conservation Chair for the NPSNM Board winter meeting, 2021

by Rachel Jankowitz

Activities completed since the January 2020 Board meeting at Sevilleta NWR:

- a. Wrote and sent letter of April 15 to the Supervisor of the Gila National Forest, commenting on the draft Revised Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.
- b. Attended a virtual public meeting, then wrote a letter to the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, commenting on the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and associated Environmental Impact Statement. This letter was sent to the agencies on September 9.
- c. Wrote and sent letter of November 4 to the Supervisor of the Lincoln National Forest, commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Non-native Invasive Plant Management.
- d. Wrote Conservation Corner articles for spring, summer, fall and winter issues of the NPSNM newsletter.

From B. Fix: We shared the Governor's proclamation of Native Plant Day of New Mexico (August 15th this year) with local nurseries. Three are offering discounts on natives today, two are making contributions to NPSNM (Plants of the Southwest: 10 % of their net proceeds from the Santa Fe & Albuquerque stores that day-Hooray for Gail!).

The Santa Fe chapter also sent a letter of support for Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's proposed revisions to the state endangered plant list – RJ

From T. Stewart: Provided NPSNM comments to EMNRD about their proposed "Forest Action Plan."

Received approval from our Board to sign onto a letter to Bureau of Land Management opposing approval of a surface mine planned by American Magnesium for the Florida Mountains in Luna County, NM.

TO: Rachel Jankowitz
NPSNM Conservation chair

FROM: Jim McGrath, Conservation Committee, NPSNM – Albuquerque chapter

DATE: August 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Conservation Activity – Jan – Aug 2020
Conservation Committee
NPSNM – Albuquerque chapter

1. Jim McGrath and Lee Regan have begun to brainstorm the idea of a system of natural areas to be developed in New Mexico. Natural Area systems have been established in numerous other states. We would like to approach NM politicians with this concept. Natural areas would fill a niche between Wilderness and state and national parks. Natural areas would provide an added dimension to recreational opportunities in NM.
2. We (Sue Small, Susan Ostlie, Lee Regan, John Trochet, Arch McCallum, Jim McGrath and others – loosely referred to as the Friends of Little Water Canyon) continue to push the Cibola National Forest to provide adequate protection for the Little Water Canyon (LWC) area in the Zuni Mountains in western NM. The current preferred alternative to the revised Cibola National Forest forest management plan recommends ONLY Wild and Scenic River designation for LWC. Wild and Scenic designation only provides protection up to a quarter mile from the spring and stream in LWC. However, we have been advocating for protection of a much larger special management area. Two new developments support protection of the LWC special management area. First, John Trochet reported a spring in the nearby and parallel Water Canyon (we refer to it as “Big Water Canyon”). The Spring Stewardship Institute (SSI) inventoried LWC in June and SSI documented the spring in Big Water Canyon (BWC) following a suggestion from Jim McGrath. The presence of the spring in BWC clearly establishes the importance of the BWC and LWC areas as extremely important to wildlife in the Zuni Mountains and clearly supports the idea of a special management area that includes both LWC and BWC.

Second, Jim McGrath discovered the presence of a very rare orchid, *Piperia unalascensis*, on the top of Oso Ridge on the very north edge of the LWC watershed. The location of the orchid find is within or very near the boundary of the proposed special management area for LWC. This discovery also supports the establishment of an LWC Special Management Area that would provide much greater protection to the LWC area than just a Wild and Scenic River designation.

Sometime in 2021 the Cibola National Forest will come put with its final forest management plan. We will see if our letters and comments will have compelled the Forest to create a special management Area for LWC in the final plan. If not, those of us that did provide comments on the most recent edition of the plan will have an opportunity to comment one

last time. We can then point out these new developments in the LWC area that supports establishment of a Little Water Canyon Special Management Area.

From S. Small:

May 2020

Judge for Envirothon NM high school teams competing to create and present best plan for economic, conservation, and social justice development plans guiding sale of NE NM ranch.

June 2020

Call in for NM Interstate Stream Commission hearing on NM unit of the CAP. Commented to defund the NEPA process for Gila River diversion thus stopping any dams.

June 2020

Zoom mtg attendance for WRRRI mtg on Gold King mine/San Juan/Animas research/recovery/restoration efforts

August 2020

After a year plus Sonny Perdue delay, got accepted to CFRP Technical Advisory Panel SW Region. Will give conservation input on 9 applications from 2019 and 6 applications from 2020 for Fed funding of Collaborative Forest Restoration Projects.

**September 25, 2020 reminder re BLM plans for Chaco lease/drilling comments.

Nothing on BERNCO IVMMMP (glyphosate ban) since pandemic shutdowns, last mtg was in January, 2020.

From Joan Woodward, Las Cruces chapter:

The Las Cruces Chapter combined efforts with the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society and the Southwest Environmental Center in order to halt the habitat-destroying River Run event planned for October of 2020. The chapter alerted the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office and the International Boundary and Water Commission of the proposed rally, which was to consist of trucks, jeeps, and off-road vehicles trespassing in a seven-mile drive in the partially dry river bed of the Río Grande. (Permit for the event was denied for this year by the Boundary and Water Commission.)

From Tom Stewart: Some issues to watch for in 2021

- Any NMMD actions on the Florida Mtns. Manganese mine approved by BLM.
- The fate of Sen. Heinrich's bill to protect the Pecos watershed from any further mining.
- Release of final, revised management plans for the national forests in New Mexico.
- Will new administration turn back the new interpretation of the Clean Water Act and the definition of Waters of the United States that excludes most of NM waters?
- Will the diversion proposals for the Gila River ever die?