

# AWF

# ewsletter

## JUNE 2012

### MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, June 14, 2012 | 7:30 pm | Manzano Mesa Center

### Mexican Wolf Recovery Program

**Guest Speaker: Sherry Barrett**  
**Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**



#### Jim Hubert's Notable Quote of the Month

"As trustees of the land and wildlife, we also have a moral obligation to treat our natural resources as assets, which must be turned over to future generations increased and not impaired in value. The only way to do this is through responsible, carefully considered, honest, forward-thinking, and science-based management practices."

— Garrett VeneKlasen, *Conservative Conservationist*, in a 2011 OP-ED article about a political rally protesting a Forest Service proposal for natural resources in the Gila National Forest

The Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) is the smallest, rarest, and most genetically distinct subspecies of gray wolf in North America. Conflicts with livestock led to the eventual extirpation of the Mexican wolf in the United States in the mid-1900s. Mexican wolves were listed as an endangered species in 1976, following the passage of the 1973 Endangered Species Act. This prompted recovery efforts to save the species from extinction. In 1977 and 1978, the last known five wild Mexican wolves were captured in Durango and Chihuahua, Mexico, to establish a captive breeding population. In 1995, two additional lineages of pure Mexican wolves, held in captivity in the U.S., were integrated into the captive breeding program increasing the founder population to seven. From those first seven wolves, there is now a captive breeding program of around 300 Mexican wolves in 50 facilities in the U.S. and Mexico.

The first eleven captive-reared Mexican wolves were released into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) in 1998. We now have fourth generation pups whose great grandparents were also born in the wild. While the initial goal of 100 Mexican wolves in the wild hasn't been reached, the population in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area has grown by nearly 40% – from 42 to 58 – in the last three years. This project has certainly captured the attention of all of us ...supporters and detractors both.

In February 2011, the Fish and Wildlife Service appointed a Mexican Wolf Recovery Team, to update the 1982 Recovery Plan. This team is focusing on developing criteria that would lead to recovery and delisting of the Mexican wolf. While developing this new plan, the Recovery Team is continuing to work with partners to resolve conflicts that arise with the reestablishment of a predator on a working landscape. Learn from our speaker, Sherry Barrett, what issues they are encountering as they examine the current situation with the Mexican wolf.

Sherry Barrett spent nine years working as a Biologist for the Bureau of Reclamation in Phoenix before joining the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1990. Sherry subsequently worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno, Carlsbad, CA, and Tucson. In December 2010, Sherry moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she is now the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. Sherry received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology at Northern Arizona University and her Master of Science degree in Zoology at Arizona State University.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**As** of this writing, the Whitewater Baldy Complex fire is over 230,000 acres. It started as two separate lightning strikes on May 9 and May 16 in the rugged mountains that make up the western portion of the Gila Wilderness. Check out the map on this page or online (click on link) to see its growth path.

On May 23, as the map shows, the fires merged and grew in a northeasterly direction, pushed by strong winds. The fire perimeter expanded almost 50,000 acres in one day to over 70,000 acres. This topped the largest one-day growth of the Las Conchas Fire. It was pretty clear that the Las Conchas Fire would not hold on to the record of being New Mexico's largest fire for even one year.

Structures were lost in the town of Mogollon, but fortunately, no lives. The fire is mostly burning across one of the largest Wilderness areas in the lower 48. It may as well burn – it was going to at some point and the best that can be hoped for is large areas of low intensity burn.

An AWF volunteer was one of the first to lose his house in the Las Conchas fire. He works in the region and has been able to stay up there through connections. Probably worst off was Santa Clara Pueblo. Almost 20,000 acres of high intensity fire burned through their watershed. In August, floods hit hard sending torrents of ash and debris down the canyon. No injuries or deaths, but restoration of the land will continue for years.

For me, this is the new normal. Cerro Grande, Rodeo-Chediski, Wallow, Horseshoe 2, Donaldson, Whitewater Baldy Complex – just to name the SW fires over 100,000 acres I can think of in this century. Drought on top of a century of misguided fire suppression and we will be seeing this for some time to come. There are many large areas choked full of trees that have been drying out since the 80's. Even in droughts, the lightning still comes.

*Scial*

## PROJECT #4

### Rio de las Vacas

June 15-17, 2012

Join AWF as we spend the summer in the Jemez Mountains: Rio de las Vacas in June and Valles Caldera in July and August.

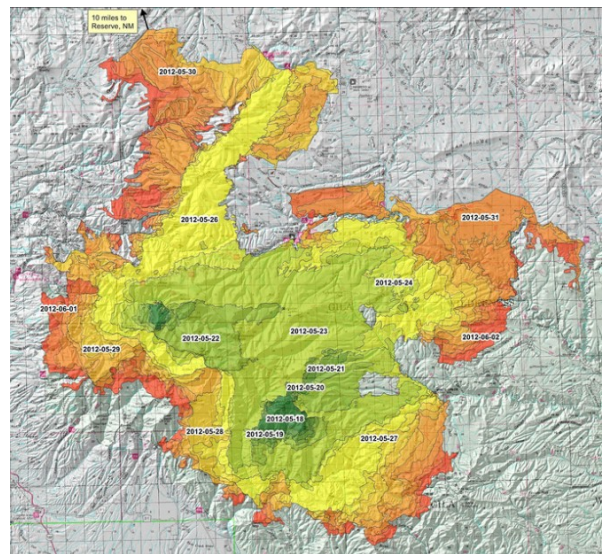
**WHERE:** Rio de las Vacas, west side of the Jemez Mountains near Cuba.

**THE PROJECT:** We will be doing vegetation planting, fence repair, and possibly structural work with rock.

**GEAR:** Everything you need for a weekend of camping. Bring the usual gear for the work – gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. Don't forget warm clothes for the evenings and plenty of water.

**FOOD:** AWF will provide breakfast burritos on Saturday morning and bison or veggie burgers to go with a **POTLUCK** on Saturday evening. Please bring your own lunches, Friday dinner, and Sunday breakfast.

**TO SIGN UP:** Contact Michael Scialdone, "Scial", at [rioscial@gmail.com](mailto:rioscial@gmail.com) or 505-480-2906. Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.



This map shows the fire's growth path from May 18-June 2.

## 2012 AWF PROJECT SCHEDULE

March 17	Cedro Creek – East Mountains
April 20-22	Cebolla Canyon I
May 18-20	Cebolla Canyon II
June 15-17	Rio de las Vacas
July 20-22	Valles Caldera I
August 17-19	Valles Caldera II
Sept 14-16	Limestone Canyon
Oct 20	Sandia Ranger District

# RECAP

## PROJECT #3

### CEBOLLA CANYON II PARTICIPANTS

Stephen Bohannon  
 Steve Carson  
 Phil Carter  
 Rodney Conant  
 Christian P. Dorko  
 Kristina G. Fisher  
 Laurie Marnell  
 Mary Maulsby  
 Toby Rosenblatt  
 Michael Scialdone  
 Mathew Schultz  
 Bob Tilley  
 Nina Wells  
 Bill Zeedyk  
 Adam Zipkin  
 Gael

## Cebolla Canyon II in May

We were back at Cebolla Canyon in the El Malpais National Conservation Area for our third Volunteer Service Project of the year, May 18-20. Under the guidance of Bill Zeedyk, Steve Carson, and Matt Schultz of NMED, the group of about 20 volunteers planted over 1,600 willows and built several rock structures, including two large filter dams (one constructed out of about 32 tons of rock!) and several rock run-downs to spread water across the meadows and increase the growing wetlands.

As Bill explained, these shallow wetlands are very important for migrating ducks and other waterfowl, which need to stop and feed on their migrations north. Upstream of the project, we checked out the remarkable progress of Cebolla Spring. This spring was a small, trampled mud hole when AWF first began working at the site over a dozen years ago—now it is over 30 acres of wetlands (see bottom two photos), and the work we did this year should help them keep growing. The transformation at this AWF “legacy project” shows how much can be done when volunteers return to the same site and work to restore it year after year. There’s much more to be done at Cebolla—and the rock to do it with!—so we look forward to returning again next year. Thanks to everyone who joined us for this project, and we hope to see many of you at Rio de las Vacas in June!

*Kristina*



That is a **BIG** pile of **BIG** rocks.  
 But AWF volunteers worked  
 their usual magic with it!

# Where Have the Sandia Bears Gone?

By Jan Hayes, Sandia Mountain BearWatch  
*Albuquerque Journal* Op-Ed Column, May 13, 2012

Every day I'm asked the question, where are the bears this year? And my answer to that question is "they're gone .... sadly ... gone for good."

In the last two years New Mexico Game and Fish (NMG&F) along with a few others have killed or removed approximately 45+ bears out of an estimated Sandia bear population of 50+.

Sandia's bears have faced many destructive forces: Mother Nature produced a series of drought years with the final blow of a harsh late frost in the spring of 2011 that killed most natural food sources; a growing, irresponsible human population that moved into these bears' territory and wanted them removed for getting into their available garbage and bird feeders; an organization that campaigned for killing all bears and cougars from our wildlife areas (especially the Sandias) on behalf of their children, and the final fatal assault, a Game and Fish department that considered black bear to be nothing but a nuisance species.

In 2010 and 2011, there were huge public outcries along with multiple newspaper articles and editorials statewide against New Mexico Game and Fish's proposed 108% increased bear hunts. Those requests for common-sense management of this species were ignored.

Most people believe that a state game department is there to protect our wildlife. In New Mexico, that couldn't be further from the truth. A real eye-opener would be for you to attend a Game and Fish Commission meeting's greed fest. Money and politics are the driving forces with conservation coming in last, if at all. Meeting after meeting, professional outfitters and hunters are fighting/suing each other for more licenses to kill more wildlife. In 20 years of attending these meetings, I've rarely heard any hunters, ranchers, etc. ask for conservation for a species. Ranchers are there to demand more licenses for resale for wildlife that sometimes forage on their ranches, farmers are there to ask for compensation for crop damage, trappers are there to ask for unlimited access to our state and federal lands, anti-wildlife city kooks are there to demand the decimation of bears and cougars. And the New Mexico Game and Fish Department are more than happy to comply...after all, this is their constituency.

The destruction of Sandia's bears is just the tip of the iceberg. In 2011, 744 bears were killed statewide. This is more than double the average of the preceding five years. If the NMG&F's statewide bear elimination pogrom goes forward as planned with a limit of 664 bears this year and 628 per year to be killed for the next four years, a five year total of 3,176 bears will be killed or over half of the NMG&F's inflated estimate of the entire bear population. This doesn't include rampant poaching, natural die-off and the NMG&F's new policy to vastly expand depredation.

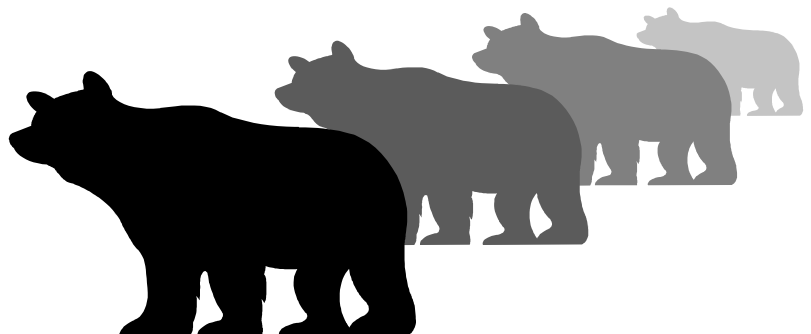
A serious concern is that the NMG&F continues to raise the female-sow hunt limit. To ensure a stable bear population, sound bear biology tells us that no more than 30% of a reasonable yearly kill should include sows. The NMG&F claims that although 44% of kills can be sows, hunters are being selective and only 31% of kills were sows in the bear hunt last year which is still too many considering that was the percentage of a huge harvest.

If the largest bear hunts in New Mexico's history go forward as planned, in a few short years the bear population will necessarily plummet. Hunters will have difficulty finding bears to kill and that means that hunters will no longer be selective which will result in a devastating sow kill-off.

Sows are the future, and the NMG&F's ongoing unsound management will be responsible for destroying that future. If you don't believe that can happen here, look to Utah and Arizona that now have some bear-free mountain ranges.

Governor Martinez has full control over New Mexico Game and Fish and what happens to our state's wildlife including this state's mammal, the black bear.

A Journal editorial on August 7, 2010, asked the question of who will hold the Game and Fish accountable for the decimation of New Mexico's bears, warning that it could result in an ecological and social disaster. My question to Governor Martinez is... who will answer for this biological disaster...should she allow it to continue?



# New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance Mounts Successful Protest

## NMOVA Thwarts Taos BLM Closures & Land Swap

### *Here's what they just reported to their membership:*

NMOHVA filed a Protest against proposed OHV closures in the Taos BLM. The Taos BLM district includes our popular riding areas at 'Buckman' (west of Santa Fe) and the 'El Palacio' OHV Area (north of Espanola). The El Palacio OHV Area is also commonly called 'Alcalde'. It's the site of the annual Rattlesnake 100 Desert Race. These closures were part of the revised 'Resource Management Plan'.

We just got the decision letter from the Washington Office of the BLM. Washington told the Taos BLM to change their Plan. Here's what this means.

**Buckman Riding Area:** The Taos BLM was going to close any trail within a mile from private land. That's a huge amount of land that would impact many miles of existing trail! Because of the Protest the Washington BLM Office told Taos BLM that they will NOT put this 'buffer zone' in the decision. From the Washington response:

However, as the protestor points out, a measure to preclude route designations in a mile-wide buffer from private property boundaries would render a substantial portion of the area unavailable to OHV travel, such that the measure would essentially equate to a closure. Since this measure was intended by the BLM to serve as a guide for future travel management planning, rather than a stringent condition; and since the analysis of potential impacts from the decisions on transportation and access did not reflect this condition, this measure will not be carried forward into an approved RMP. Instead, this area will continue to be open to OHV travel.

**El Palacio OHV Area:** NMOHVA's Protest shows the Taos BLM was plotting a backroom deal with the Ohkay Owingeh (formerly the San Juan pueblo). The pueblo lands border the OHV area. The Taos BLM was going to make up to 3,200 acres of the existing OHV area available for swapping for land in some other area. The legal description in the draft EIS amounted to only 450 acres and specifically excluded the staging area. But then in the Final EIS, the land available suddenly became 'up to 3,200 acres' for no given reason, and it no longer excluded the staging area.

ORVs have damaged every kind of ecosystem found in the United States: sand dunes covered with American beach grass on Cape Cod; pine and cyprus woodlands in Florida; hardwood forests in Indiana; prairie grasslands in Montana; chaparral and sagebrush hills in Arizona; alpine meadows in Colorado; conifer forests in Washington; arctic tundra in Alaska. In some cases the wounds will heal naturally; in others they will not, at least not for millennia.

– David Sheridan 1979



# Los Amigos de Valles Caldera Invite You to a Project June 22-24

Los Amigos de Valles Caldera is sponsoring a weekend campout and volunteer work project June 22-24 in the Valle Toledo area of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. For more information check our website at [www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org](http://www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org) under the Events link or contact [jdcrane@valornet.com](mailto:jdcrane@valornet.com). Or phone 575-829-3648.

## Help USFS Install a Trick Tank June 9

The Smokey Bear Ranger District will host a volunteer workday on Saturday, June 9 to help with final assembly of the Salazar Trick Tank for deer [similar to the one pictured below]. Participants will meet at SBRD at 7:30 am or Capitan Pass Turnoff at 8:30. Forest Service will provide transportation from either location out to the project site. All volunteers need to bring is a lunch and FS will provide water and Gatorade. Please remember to wear sturdy boots, pants, long sleeves, hats and gloves. Sunscreen is highly recommended as the work site is not shaded. For information, contact Brian Davis:

[briandavis@fs.fed.us](mailto:briandavis@fs.fed.us)  
W: 575-434-7375  
C: 208-841-7297

Dale Hall  
Habitat Stamp Program  
NMDG&F



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[abq.nmwildlife.org](http://abq.nmwildlife.org)

**AWF MEETING LOCATION**  
Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center  
501 Elizabeth SE at Southern

# A W F M E M B E R S H I P A P P L I C A T I O N

**Albuquerque Wildlife Federation | PO Box 20225 | Albuquerque, NM 87154**  
*An affiliate of New Mexico Wildlife Federation*

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