

THE MESQUITE GRILL

NEWS FROM THE SOUTHWEST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER • SPRING 2009

Huge Victory in Battle for Otero Mesa

Court invalidates BLM drilling plan; momentum shifts towards protection

In a stunning victory for the Southwest Environmental Center and other conservation groups that have been fighting to protect the grasslands, wildlife and water of Otero Mesa for the past 7 years, the United States 10th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision on April 28 invalidating the Bureau of Land Management's oil and gas drilling plan for New Mexico's Otero Mesa.

The court ruled that the BLM's original Resource Management Plan Amendment, which opened the vast majority of Otero Mesa to oil and gas leasing and limited protection for the desert grasslands, was fatally flawed due to its failure to consider protection for Otero Mesa and the Salt Basin Aquifer.



The court's ruling has given Otero Mesa's grasslands and wildlife like these pronghorn a reprieve. Photo Joe Adair.

courts share our steadfast position that the public must have a voice in decisions affecting oil and gas leasing on Otero Mesa."

The court ruled that the BLM had to consider an alternative that closed Otero Mesa to oil and gas leasing, admonishing the agency that "[d]evelopment is a possible use, which BLM must weigh against other possible uses—including conservation to protect environmental values, which are best assessed through the NEPA process."

The court went on to write that, "applying the rule of reason, we [the court] agree...

that analysis of an alternative closing the Mesa to development is compelled."

The court also rejected the BLM's position that there were no significant risks to the Salt Basin Aquifer, which contains millions of acre-feet of potable water, from oil and gas, noting that the agency had not reviewed "relevant data" and characterized the information included in the agency's own documentation as "point[ing] uniformly in the opposite direction from the agency's determination, we cannot defer to that determination."

Perhaps most significant was the court's rejection of BLM's argument that prohibiting development of Otero Mesa would violate its mandate under federal law to manage for "multiple use." The court ruled that the multiple use concept "does not mandate that every use be accommo-

(continued on page 4)



The ruling came in connection with a lawsuit filed by a coalition of conservation organizations including SWEC, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, the New Mexico and National Wildlife Federations, and WildEarth Guardians, and a lawsuit filed by the State of New Mexico.

"This is a major boost in our fight to protect one of New Mexico's most ecologically valuable and unique places," Governor Bill Richardson said. "I am pleased that the



Lords of Nature--May 15

Celebrate Aldo Leopold and Lobos!
Premiere screening, Silver City, NM.
See page 3.

12th Annual Raft the Rio

All day fun on the river, June 13. Start building your rafts! Details page 5.



SWEC goes to the ballpark!

Join us at the El Paso Diablos game Monday, June 1. Details page 6.



Meet our new board members...

And a few great volunteers and business supporters! Page 6.

What's a bosque party?

Who cares, you're invited! Friday, June 12. More info page 6.



River clean up--June 6

Join us on Saturday morning to clean up the Rio Grande. See p. 6 for details.

The War on Predators: Why Fish and Game Agencies Can't Manage Predators

by George Wuerthner

In the past month or so, helicopters with gunners skimmed over the Alaskan tundra and forests shooting wolves to "protect" caribou herds. In Nevada, the state Fish and Game agency wants to kill more mountain lions to increase mule deer numbers. In Idaho, the Idaho Game and Fish wants to kill more than a hundred wolves in the Lolo Pass area to benefit elk.

Without exception, state game and fish agencies do not treat predators like other wildlife. Even though state agencies are no longer engaged in outright extermination of predators, persecution and limited acceptance of the ecological role of predators is still the dominant attitude. State wildlife agencies only tolerate predators as long as they are not permitted to play a meaningful ecological role.

Ecological value of predators

Much recent research has demonstrated many ecological values to predators. As top-down regulators of ecosystems, predators like wolves, mountain lion, and bears help to reduce herbivore numbers to slow or reduce over-browsing or overgrazing of plant communities.

Perhaps more importantly, predator shift how prey animals use their habitat. For instance, it is well documented that the presence of wolves in Yellowstone has changed how elk use the landscape, with less browsing on riparian vegetation as one consequence.

But wolf-induced habitat shifts by elk has had other benefits as well. Since the road system in Yellowstone tends to follow the river valleys, movement of elk away from streams to adjacent uplands increases the likelihood that a certain percentage of the animals will die further from a road. This has important consequences for grizzly bears that have been shown to avoid feeding on carcasses located close to roads. Finding even one more elk carcass in the spring in a place that is "safe" for feeding is like winning the lottery for, say, a mother grizzly with several cubs to feed.

Some scientists have even postulated that wolves may ameliorate the effects of climate change on scavenger species by providing carrion throughout the year.

Predators can also limit the effects of disease, like chronic wasting disease found in elk, deer, and moose since infected animals are more vulnerable to predators.

The presence of a large predator has a cascading effect on all other predators as well. For instance, the presence of wolves results in fewer coyotes. Since coyotes are among the major predators on pronghorn fawns, presence of wolves has led to higher pronghorn fawn survival.



There are no bag limits on coyotes in many states, including New Mexico and Arizona. Photo AZ Game and Fish Dept.

And because of the bias of state wildlife agencies for maintaining large numbers of huntable species, they fail to even ask

whether predation might have a positive influence on ecosystem sustainability.

For instance, in certain circumstances, top predators like wolves, bears, and mountain lions will hold prey populations low for an extended period of time, especially if habitat quality is marginal for the herbivores. These "predator sinks" provide the long term "rest" from herbivory pressure that plant communities may require on occasion to reestablish or recover from past herbivory pressure. Almost universally when predators begin to "hold down" prey populations, state agencies want to kill them so the targeted populations of moose, caribou, elk, deer, or whatever it might be can "recover."

Unfortunately for predators if their numbers are sufficiently high for them to have these ecological effects on other wildlife as well as the plant communities, state wildlife agencies tend to view them as too high for their "management objectives."

Reasons for failure

[W]hen it comes to predators there are two major reasons for the failure of state wildlife agencies to adopt objective and biologically sound predator policies. [I]f left to the biologists, I suspect we would find that agencies would manage wildlife with a greater attention

to ecological integrity.

However, curbing such impulses by wildlife professionals are the politically appointed wildlife commissions. While criteria for appointments vary from state to state, in general, commissioners are selected to represent primarily rural residents, timber companies and agricultural interests—all of whom are generally hostile to predators and/or see it as almost a God-given requirement that humans manage the Earth to "improve" it and fix the lousy job that God did by creating wolves and mountain lions.

The other reason state agencies tend to be less enthusiastic supporters of predators has to do with funding. State wildlife agencies "dance with the one that brung ya." Most non-hunters do not realize that state wildlife agencies are largely funded by hunter license fees as well as taxes on hunting equipment, rather than general taxpayer support. This creates a direct conflict of interest for state wildlife agencies when it comes to managing for species that eat the animals hunters want to kill.

Adding to this entire funding nightmare for agencies is the decline in hunter participation. There are fewer and fewer hunters these days.

In my view, we need to restore not only taken populations of wolves to a few wilderness and park sanctuaries, we ought to be striving to restore the ecological role of top predators to as much as of the landscape as reasonably possible. While we may never tolerate or want mountain lions in Boise city limits, grizzly bears strolling downtown Bozeman or wolves roaming the streets of Denver, there is no reason we can't have far larger and more widely distributed predator populations across the entire West, as well as the rest of the nation. But this will never happen as long as state wildlife agencies see their primary role to satisfy hunter expectations for maximized hunting opportunities for ungulates like deer and elk rather than managing wildlife for the benefit of all citizens and ecosystem integrity.

George Wuerthner hunts and writes in Alaska. This article originally appeared in its entirety in Counterpunch online magazine. (<http://www.counterpunch.org/wuerthner04172009.html>) Reprinted with permission.

Film screening celebrates “Lobos and Leopold”

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Aldo Leopold's arrival in the Southwest. The Southwest Environmental Center is celebrating both Leopold, the visionary conservationist, and the role of predators such as the Mexican Wolf (El Lobo), with a premiere New Mexico screening of the film, *Lords of Nature*, at the Silco Theatre in Silver City on May 15, Friday, at 8 PM.

Lords of Nature, created by Green Fire Productions and narrated by Peter Coyote, journeys to the heart of predator country: the Yellowstone plateau, the canyons of Zion, the farm country of northern Minnesota and the rugged open range of central Idaho— all places now resettled by the great predators society once banished. Here scientists discover these top carnivores are revitalizing forces of nature, a “keystone” species whose presence in sufficient numbers can dramatically reverse the slow decay of America's wild places, especially in the West.

The film also deals with the legacy of Aldo



Aldo Leopold came to understand the importance of predators like wolves and helped changed public attitudes towards them. Photo Aldo Leopold Foundation.

Leopold as a naturalist, who eventually realized the importance of wolves as part of his land-ethic: a land lacking its top predators is a land subject to decay. *Lords of Nature* tracks several scientists as they document the revitalization of entire eco-systems due to the presence of top predators: “...whether it's cougar in a mule deer system like Zion or wolves in an elk system like Yellowstone National Park,” according to Robert Beschta, professor emeritus at Oregon State University, one of the sci-

entists interviewed in the film.

The film will be followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Kevin Bixby, SWEC Executive Director. Panel participants will include Silver City-based author, Sharman Apt Russell, whose 1993 book, *Kill the Cowboy: A Battle of Mythology in the New West*, deals partly with the many thorny issues surrounding predator “control” versus balance and recovery.

Other panelists include Kevin Hansen, author of *Cougar: The American Lion*, and former Science Director of the Mountain Lion Foundation, based in Sacramento, California. There will also be a representative from the New Mexico Game & Fish Department.

“The focus on Leopold and Lobos is appropriate and timely,” said Bixby. “Just as Leopold went from an anti-predator zealot to someone who championed the ecological importance of wolves—as famously described in his *Thinking Like A Mountain* essay—so too have public attitudes towards predators moved towards greater acceptance and appreciation. Leopold would undoubtedly be pleased to know the species he once helped to eradicate—the Mexican wolf—is now making a comeback in the Southwest.”

Doors open at 7:30 PM. Admission is free.

A similar event is scheduled for Las Cruces at the Rio Grande Theater on August 28. Stay tuned for details.

New Lobo website

The Southwest Environmental Center has joined with local, regional, and national conservation, scientific, and sportsmen's organizations, and concerned citizens in launching a new website, mexicanwolves.org, to help save this highly endangered animal.

The new website has everything related to the Southwest's lobos, including beautiful photos, news updates, ways to get involved and take action, information about the reintroduction program, a Kids Zone with fun educational activities, and more.

Visit it at www.mexicanwolves.org.

Lobo update

Quick, name the earth's most endangered mammal. Polar bear? Mountain gorilla? Black rhino?

The answer may be right here in the Southwest—the Mexican wolf (lobo).

Eleven years after the reintroduction of Mexican wolves began in March, 1998, the total wild population of lobos in the wild at the end of 2008 was 52 wolves and 2 breeding pairs, far below expected numbers. The wild population was lower at the beginning of 2009 than it was at the end of 2003.

The major reason for the slow progress has been a management policy by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that favors wolf “control” over recovery. When rare conflicts between livestock and wolf occur, the wolf usually winds up dead or back in captivity. Since 1998, 11 wolves have been lethally controlled for killing livestock, several have died from “stress” during capture, and 34 wolves have been removed from the wild.

Hopefully that will soon change. The Southwest Environmental Center and other groups are urging the Obama administration and Congress to take three important actions.

1) immediately suspend the current policy of “three strikes and you're out” (also known as Standard Operating Procedure 13) which calls the permanent removal from the wild—either by trapping or killing—of any wolf involved in three livestock incidents in one year. This rule has resulted in the removal of many wolves and the loss of valuable genetic diversity within the wild population.

2) develop a new recovery plan. The current plan is 26 years old. It was written before the principles of modern conservation biology were developed and lacks numerical goals for defining recovery.

3) support legislation for a federally-funded, voluntary livestock-grazing permit retirement program that generously compensates willing leaseholders on public lands in and around the Recovery Area for ceding their grazing privileges. This would require the Forest Service and BLM to permanently retire allotments from livestock use.

What You Can Do.

Contact your Congressional representatives and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar (see contact info on p. 5) and urge them to do these three things.

New study: Otero Mesa drilling would bring few benefits to Otero County

A new study by an independent research organization says that proposed energy development by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Otero Mesa would provide few economic benefits to Otero County, and that preserving this wild grassland would be a wiser investment for local communities.

The Headwaters Economics study shows that the limited economic benefits of drilling won't even cover the county's share of infrastructure and services costs related to drilling, with even the most favorable projections peaking at just over 1 percent of Otero County's revenue from 2007 and making even less of a contribution for most years. And, the number of new jobs created would



Proposed drilling on Otero Mesa would bring few economic benefits to Otero County, but could harm other sectors such as tourism, according to a new report. Photo Joe Adair.

be small, only about 1 percent of all county employment over four years.

Other economic sectors could be harmed, too, such as the travel and tourism industries, which account for about 6 percent of Otero County's current employment.

The report concludes that drilling Otero Mesa would create few economic and fiscal benefits, while potentially foreclosing future economic opportunities.

The report is the eighth in Headwaters Economics' Energy and the West series, which outlines the impacts of energy development in several Western states and counties.

The full report can be found online at www.headwaterseconomics.org.

What's next for Otero Mesa?

The court ruling is significant, but at its core only requires BLM to redo its planning, not come up with a different result. There is no guarantee that the next plan won't open up Otero Mesa to drilling as well, or that if it is better, it won't be reversed under a future administration.

The only way to ensure permanent protection for Otero Mesa is by getting Congress to establish a National Conservation Area or similar designation that would allow for existing uses but put the area permanently off limits to oil and gas development and other harmful new developments.

What you can do:

Please contact your Congressional representatives (and Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar). Urge them to sponsor and support legislation to withdraw the 500,000 acres of Otero Mesa grasslands permanently from federal oil and gas leasing. See the list of contacts on page 5.

Natural gas is not a clean fuel: a cautionary tale

by Don Young, SWEC member

Greetings from Forth Worth, Texas, the "sweet spot" of the Barnett Shale gas reserves, and the largest urban area to allow widespread and largely unregulated gas drilling in the country.

Forth Worth, previously known as "Cowtown," is now more accurately known as "Dirty Ol' Town" as urban drilling has spread into residential neighborhoods and near parks and schools. As bad as that is, the rural areas of the 21 county Barnett Shale region are even more impacted.

The grass-covered hills are now strewn with gas wells: over 10,000 drilled in the Barnett Shale in just a few short years. Each 3-5 acre, gravel covered pad-site is serviced by at least one gravel road. The cumulative impact is a network of roads crisscrossing the open prairie, leaving it vulnerable to invasive species and erosion.

That's only the beginning. Every gas well requires pipeline, gathering lines and other infrastructure. Country roads are now snaked with large diameter lines filled with danger-

ous, un-odorized natural gas. Additionally there's noise pollution caused by perpetually noisy compressor stations, moving the gas up the line.

A controversial drilling technology known as fracking or fracturing, requires approximately 4 million gallons of clean drinking water, sand and dozens of toxic chemicals per well. Many rural residents living near drill sites complain of depleted and contaminated water wells. One goat rancher living near a gas well was forced to sell his herd and abandon his property after polluted well water sickened his animals. Even taking a shower became a health hazard.

Even more troubling, millions of gallons of highly corrosive "produced saltwater," which contains thousands of gallons of fracking fluids must be disposed of. This highly toxic mixture is being injected under extreme pressure into disposal wells. Some of these disposal wells have actually caught fire due to the presence of hydrocarbons. Reports of these poisons migrating into fresh water aquifers are a growing concern as are ever increasing reports of illegal

Otero Mesa Ruling

(continued from front page)

dated on every piece of land; rather, delicate balancing is required."

In an Associated Press story, New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary Joanna Prukop was quoted as saying she was pleased with the ruling's strong language regarding compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act.

"In addition to protecting the fragile ecosystem of the Chihuahan Desert, this decision will apply to development of all kinds on federal lands throughout the 10th Circuit and help assure that environmental impacts are appropriately considered," she said.

dumping.

Air pollution from gas drilling in the Barnett Shale is now greater than all the vehicles and airports combined in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

Don't be fooled by industry rhetoric. Natural gas is just another dirty fossil fuel as its production and transmission proves. Don't let them destroy Otero Mesa. Let Fort Worth be your cautionary tale.

Voice your opinion!

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Start building your rafts!

Annual raft race on the Rio Grande set for June 13

The Southwest Environmental Center's twelfth annual Raft the Rio will be held on Saturday, June 13, 2009 on the Rio Grande near Las Cruces. The family-friendly event is open to individuals and teams of all ages willing to get wet and have fun.

The three-mile rafting adventure will begin at La Llorona Park beneath the Picacho Street bridge, and end just upstream from the Calle del Norte Bridge ("Mesilla Bridge"). Creativity and the use of discarded materials in building rafts is highly encouraged.

Prizes will be awarded to homemade boats in the following categories: Best use of recycled materials, Least likely to finish (must be floating at start of race), First to finish, Most creative, Spirit of the River.

This year there are two divisions: Kids and Open. Prizes will be awarded in both divisions. The Kids Division race begins at 10 a.m. sharp., followed by the Open Division at 10:15. To be eligible for the Kids' Division, at least half the sailors on a boat must be under 13 years of age.

The river is expected to be full, due to releases of irrigation water from Caballo Reservoir. Teams may register at the starting line beginning at 8:00 a.m., or in advance by con-

tacting the Southwest Environmental Center.

The entry fee is \$10 per raft in advance (or \$20 on race day), plus \$5 for each crew member 13 years and older (after the first two). Motorized craft are not allowed. New Mexico law requires that all participants wear personal flotation devices.

All participants will be entered in a drawing to win an exciting whitewater raft trip for two on the Rio Grande near Taos, courtesy of event sponsor Far Flung Adventures. There will be refreshments, food vendors and live music at the finish line.

In keeping with the environmental spirit of the event, participants are encouraged to minimize their

purchase of new materials for making rafts.

This year's event sponsors also include: Malooly's Flooring, RETHINK Real Estate, Positive Energy, Dental Associates, International Delights, Citizens Bank, Las Cruces Toyota, Boldt Family Trust, Life in Balance Pilates Studio, Zia Engineering & Environmental, Las Cosas Kitchen Shoppe, Desert Meadow Stables, Kate & Russell Mott, Meg Sanchez-Ikard, Sally Williams & Bill Perry, John & Ella Nelson.

For more information and to register, call (575) 522-5552.



More than 130 boats started the race in last year's Raft the Rio. Some were lost at sea.

Border Wall update

All but 46 miles of the original 670 miles of border wall and vehicle barriers mandated by the 2006 Secure Fence Act have been completed. The new Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, is in no hurry to build more solid walls.

Arizona Representative Raul Grijalva has recently re-introduced legislation in the House (HR 2076), the Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009. HR 2076 seeks to reverse the most damaging impacts of the 2005 Real ID Act, which gave absolute waiver authority to the DHS Secretary to waive all local, state, and federal environmental and public health

laws--any law that could possibly delay border wall construction.

HR 2076 amends the current law, based on the "one fence fits all" solution. The legislation ensures that local experts are part of the planning and evaluation of security measures that would be more effective and have a lower impact on the border environment. It checks the power of an unelected official to ignore such Acts as the Endangered Species and Safe Drinking Water Acts, as well as dozens of others.

What you can do

Urge your house representative to support HR 2076. See contact info this page.

Bosque Party to kick off Raft the Rio

It's that time of year again! Raft the Rio floaters will cast off on June 13th. But back up! This year, a pre-party/fundraiser at the Bosque Park hosted by Kate and Russell Mott, Meg Sanchez-Ikard and Peter Lammers, Paul Mitchell and Genevieve Chavez, Mike and Diane Lilley, and Tom and Donna Tate will kick-off the rafting event. The fundraiser/party is by invitation only, so if you are interested in being on the invite list, coming down to mingle and give to a great cause, call Lauren at 575 522-5552 or email her at lauren@wildmesquite.org.

SWEC River Clean-up Day set for June 6

Join us on June 6th from 8-10 am as we celebrate National River Cleanup week by cleaning the banks of the Rio Grande. We will be picking up trash from the Mesilla dam to Calle de Norte bridge. Feel like doing something good for the river? Call Lauren at 575 522-5552 or email her at lauren@wildmesquite.org.

Batter-up for the Environment!

Rally up the fam and join SWEC at the Diablo's game in El Paso on June 1 for an evening full of crackerjacks and hotdogs and give the slogan "take me out to the ball game" a whole new meaning. We will be selling tickets outside of the game and the proceeds go to benefit SWEC. You heard it right! Homeruns and habitat restoration all in one! For details, contact Lauren at 575 522-5552 or email her at lauren@wildmesquite.org.

Mark your calendars!

The Southwest Environmental Center's 13th Annual 'On the River, For the River' fundraising gala will be held on September 26th of 2009. This year's event will be yet another blast at the Bosque with dinner catered by Andele Restaurant in collaboration with private chef Brian Curry, live music under the stars, tasty spirits and loads of fun! What better way to support the restoration of our beautiful river? For more information, contact Lauren at 575 522-5552 or by email at lauren@wildmesquite.org. Hope to see you there!

SWEC welcomes new board members

SWEC has recently added four new members to its board of directors.

Ella Nelson says she has come full circle. Born in Las Cruces and raised on a farm on Union Ave, she is currently retired and once again living on a small farm on Union Ave. Her parents were farmers; her father being a third generation farmer in the Mesilla Valley. She attended local schools and am a graduate of Las Cruces High, NMSU and the USC School of physical therapy.



Ella Nelson

She and her husband John moved to their farm thirty years ago and have a pecan orchard which they are converting to organic. They have three children and two granddaughters. Ella has a small community organic garden with seven friends now in its fourth season.

Paul Mitchell is a New Mexico native, and has lived in Las Cruces for 23 years. He and his wife Genevieve Chavez have been married for 25 years and have four sons.

He is a CPA and a former partner with

Beasley, Mitchell and Co. He sat on the formational and operating boards of St. Luke's Health Care Clinic in Las Cruces and the Women's Intercultural Center in Anthony. He was involved in the Scouting program for many years.



Paul Mitchell

He enjoys backpacking, hiking, camping, rock climbing and guitar. His latest endeavor is involvement in an organic farm north of Monticello, NM, reflecting his belief that if our key focus is not on the sustainability of our food and water systems, we can't expect to sustain ourselves.



Meg Sanchez-Ikard

Meg Sanchez-Ikard and Andrea Schneider are the other new board members. Meg works as a realtor with board president Kate Mott. Andrea is owner of Andele Restaurant in Mesilla.

Meet our business supporters

Michael Lilley has practiced law in Las Cruces since 1980, either solo or in a small firm. He is past president of the NM Trial Lawyers Association, recipient of the ACLU-NM Lawyer of the Year award and recipient of the Driscoll award for commitment to constitutional rights from the NM Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. He has been a full-time and part-time lobbyist for NM-CDLA for 15 years.



Lilley became interested in the environmental movement during the early 1990s after several trips delivering humanitarian aid to victims of civil wars in Central America. He was struck both by the beauty of the undeveloped areas of Central America, and the squalor of the overdeveloped and polluted areas.

An avid outdoorsman, Lilley decided to become active in preserving New Mexico's environment. He served on both the SWEC board and the New Mexico Environmental Law Cen-

ter board for about 10 years. He continues to support environmental causes financially and through volunteering. He takes great pride in the opening of the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park, a brain child of SWEC, since he has done volunteer work for many years at the site, which is near his home.

Peace Village 2009

The fourth annual Peace Village, a non-denominational summer day camp, will offer two one-week sessions at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Las Cruces. The first week, July 13-17 will be for those entering grades 6 to 10. The second week, July 20-24 will be for entering grades 1 to 5. Registration closes on June 15. A \$50 fee includes snacks and materials. Scholarships are available.

For information call (575) 382-9526 or email Barmcq@q.com.

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Don Patterson (3rd from left) accepts keys from Las Cruces Toyota General Manager George Vescovo, as SWEC board members Kate Mott (far left), Meg Sanchez-Ikard (2nd from right), Ella Nelson (far right) and SWEC Executive Director Kevin Bixby look on.

We have a winner!

Congratulations to Don Patterson, the winner in the Southwest Environmental Center's drawing for a 2009 Toyota Prius! Out of 400 tickets sold, it was his that was pulled at SWEC's Earth Day party on April 22.

For everyone who bought a ticket, we wish you could all be winners. However, we are VERY grateful for your support and thank you for playing. It was a very successful fundraiser, and we hope you'll take some consolation in knowing that your money will be well spent protecting and restoring wildlife and wildlands in the Southwest.

And don't forget...there's always next year!

Do we have your email address?

Email is the most effective way for us to communicate with our members. If you would like to receive electronic announcements about events and issues, send an email to list@wildmesquite.org. We promise not to overwhelm your inbox, and we never trade or sell our list.

Our mission

Established in 1991, the Southwest Environmental Center works to reverse the accelerating loss of plants and animals worldwide by protecting and restoring native wildlife and their habitats in the Southwestern borderlands. We do this through grassroots advocacy, education and on-the-ground restoration projects.

Meet our members

Ronald and Violet Cauthon, born in Oklahoma, were both raised on small family acreages where the love of outdoors became a



Longtime members Ron and Vi Cauthon have volunteered many hours for SWEC.

permanent part of their lives. Their proudest achievement is raising their three children into responsible adults who also respect the environment and support its stewardship. Ron and Vi "ran away from home" in 1992 to make a new life in the Land of Enchantment. During their run-away period, they spent five months

traveling and camping in the western United States, rejoicing in its beauty. Both have had a lifelong interest in Native American history and art; Ron because his father's field periodically yielded arrowheads and Vi because of her Cherokee heritage. Early in their Las Cruces residency they discovered SWEC, which they now call their number one environmental organization.

Ann and Gordon Berman have lived in Las Cruces since the mid-1970s and in their home on the west mesa since 1980. Gordon is an attorney and Ann is a musician and music teacher. They have two grown and married children.

Gordon hikes as much as possible in the desert and mountains and takes lots of photos of lizards and insects. They both love to gar-

den and grow tomatoes in raised beds on our patio, plus lots of herbs in beds around our house. They have a large number



Ann and Gordon Berman love the desert and the view from their west mesa home.

of cactuses and succulents in pots around the house and patios and have converted most of our garden plots to native plants and cactuses. They've never had a grass lawn and keep the desert area around our house so they can watch the birds, rabbits, and other wildlife, plus enjoy their great view of the valley and mountains.

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