

The Gila at 100

Celebrating A Remarkable Conservation Success

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



From our Board Chair

Dear members and supporters:

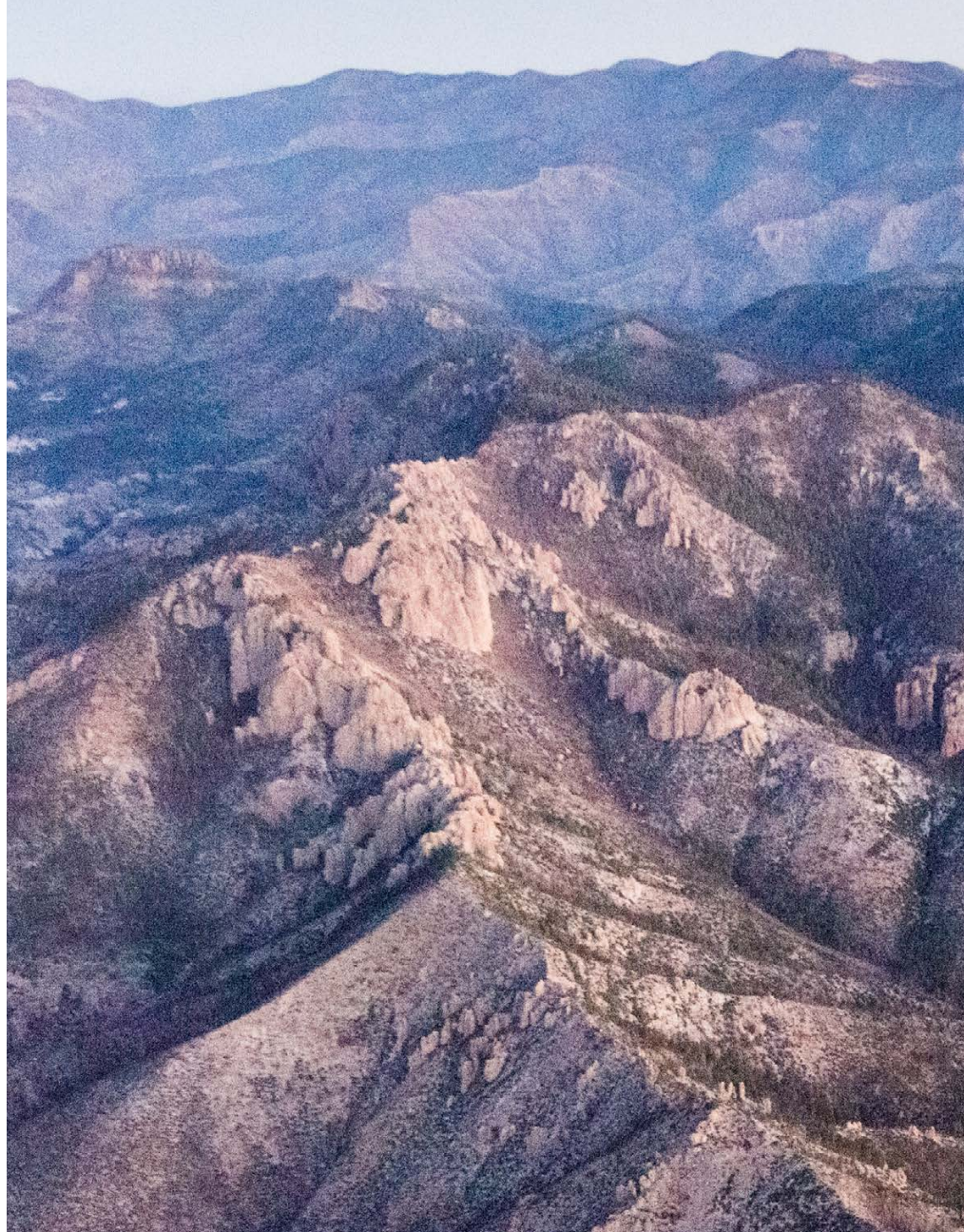
Recently, the nonpartisan group Center for Western Priorities released a report finding that many iconic landscapes would have been marred by logging and mining if we had not protected them as national parks and monuments over the last 100 years. It is hard to believe that most of these places we treasure faced strong opposition at their creation. It makes us marvel even more at the foresight of Aldo Leopold, who fought to create the first designated wilderness, the Gila Wilderness, right here in New Mexico. That vision has now grown to 39 wilderness areas in our state and more than 800 nationally.

We've been celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Gila Wilderness all year long, and rightly so. However, we can't rest on Aldo Leopold's remarkable achievement. With our state facing climate change, unprecedented biodiversity loss, and water shortages, protecting public lands and waters is even more urgent today. Your support this past year has enabled New Mexico Wild to continue its legacy of land, wildlife, and water protection. Thank you.



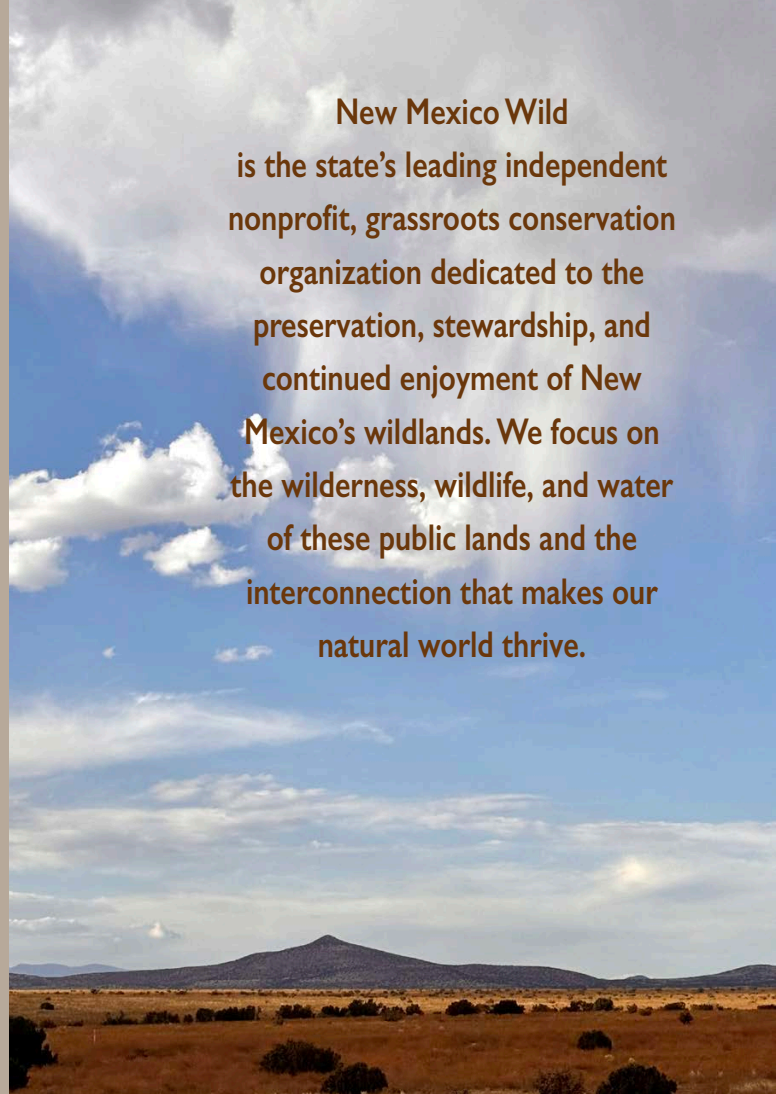
Wendy Brown
BOARD CHAIR

The Gila Wilderness.
Photo by Michael Melford/National Geographic





New Mexico Wild
is the state's leading independent
nonprofit, grassroots conservation
organization dedicated to the
preservation, stewardship, and
continued enjoyment of New
Mexico's wildlands. We focus on
the wilderness, wildlife, and water
of these public lands and the
interconnection that makes our
natural world thrive.



Tetilla Peak on the Caja del Rio Plateau. Photo by Sara Bergthold

“The **Gila Wilderness** never fails to mesmerize and inspire.”

Mark Allison has been Executive Director of New Mexico Wild for the past 11 years. He shares his perspective on what the Gila Wilderness means to him and to countless others who walk its trails or paddle its rivers.

The first, largest, most biodiverse and wildest wilderness, the Gila Wilderness in Southwest New Mexico, has a special place in my heart. It may be hard to get to but it's easy to fall in love with—maybe, in part *because* it is hard to get to. I've been fortunate to accumulate many memories of this one-of-a-kind place over the decades.

A few of these include running the state's premier wilderness kayak trip, waking up to mornings with a frozen wetsuit and neoprene boots.

Backpacking through the wilderness, sometimes post holing through thigh deep snow in the high country and fighting heat that made the ground feel like magma, sometimes on the same trip.

I've spent time with dogs now gone and friends who've since moved away. I've passed the late M.H. “Dutch” Salmon's favorite fishing hole and read aloud remembrances on the banks of the river for friends and family who are no longer with us. I've communed with the largest bull elk I've ever seen, locking eyes as we stumbled into each other at the top of a saddle near dusk. I've spotted a rare and colorful elegant trogon in the heart of the wilderness.

I've celebrated life events, mourned losses, and made decisions while there. I've enjoyed

precious days of solitude and silence. I've forgotten a sleeping bag on a cold weather trip and watched disapprovingly as a friend gave away beer we labored to pack in to a stranger at a hot spring. I've grown up seeing feral cows where they shouldn't be and lived long enough to finally see them gone. I've seen the power of a wild, undammed river do scarcely believable things. I've been humbled by the knowledge of occupying the same space as peoples and cultures who have been here since time immemorial.

I've felt the hairs on the back of my neck rise with the electric certainty that I was being watched by an unseen mountain lion and had buddies behind me on the trail inform me that

ails to humble, awe,

they'd seen lion prints *on top of* my boot tracks. I've lain in my sleeping bag looking through sycamores at the Milky Way and shooting stars against a dark sky. I've gone days without seeing another soul and unexpectedly run into people I know deep in on the trail. I've had multiple flat tires getting to trailheads and boat launch sites and been pleased to catch discrepancies and errors on maps.

In short, I've had the privilege of being swallowed up whole by this place. I've recognized the enormity of my smallness in this world. The Gila Wilderness never fails to humble, awe, mesmerize, and inspire.

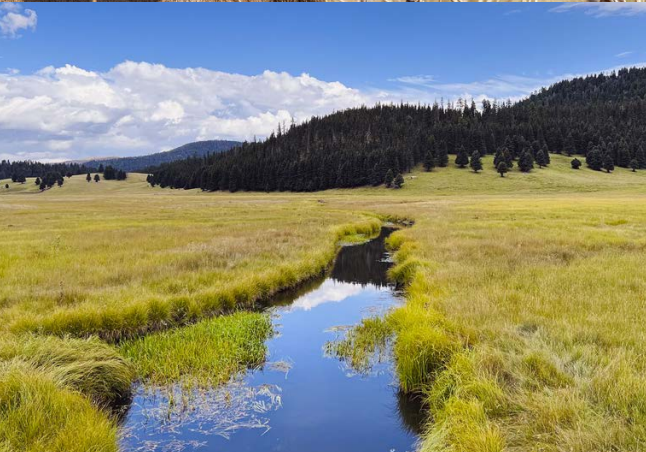
Even as we celebrate this centennial milestone of the designation of the Gila Wilderness, we know

there is more work to be done. I'm grateful for the foresight of those who came before us and proud of the special role New Mexico played—and still plays—in conservation. It's my privilege to work with you to do all we can to save what is left before it is gone forever, for its own sake and for future generations—human and wildlife alike.



Mark Allison
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Gila Wilderness.
Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock



2024: A Year in Review

This has been a year filled with conservation challenges and successes. Here are six of the many highlights (and low lights) where New Mexico Wild was engaged:

MOST ENDANGERED

This year, our longtime partner American Rivers named all the rivers in New Mexico as the “Most Endangered Rivers” in the country. For 39 years, this national conservation organization has created its annual list of rivers at risk, and this was the first time the group named every river in a state. Their listing was directly linked to the 2023 Supreme Court decision scaling back the Clean Water Act, a ruling which harms our state far more than most.

A CONSERVATION LEGACY

This past year New Mexico invested \$300 million in the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund for land, water, and wildlife conservation programs. The money can be used as matching funds to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in federal money for all 33 counties and Tribal communities in New Mexico.

LIFE-SUSTAINING WATERS

Because of the Supreme Court ruling that weakens the federal Clean Water Act, New Mexico needs to establish a surface water quality permitting program to prevent water pollution before it happens. This year, great strides took place toward making that program a reality. The Legislature voiced its support by appropriating funds for this effort. The 2024 session included over \$147 million in advancements for water this year:

\$7.6 million—surface water quality permitting program

\$75 million—New Mexico Match Fund

\$2 million—River Stewardship Program

\$5 million—acequia improvements statewide

\$50 million—Water Trust Fund

\$7.5 million—extension of last session’s historic appropriation for the Strategic Water Reserve

CATTLE IN THE CALDERA

New Mexico Wild staff and volunteers monitoring cattle in the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) revealed that federal land managers have failed to stop persistent trespass grazing on this sensitive wildlife habitat. Our documentation elevated the issue and helped spur funding for fence repair, the addition of wrangler staff, and an interagency agreement between the VCNP and the Santa Fe National Forest for shared enforcement.

A POTENTIAL LOSS FOR THE CAJA DEL RIO...

The battle over proposed transmission lines across the spectacular Caja del Rio near Santa Fe continued over this past year. More than 23,000 comments were submitted in opposition to the 14-mile electric transmission towers and lines. Despite that, the U.S. Forest Service released a draft decision to allow its construction across this sacred plateau. New Mexico Wild authored and submitted a formal objection on behalf of the Caja coalition. We are calling for permanent protection of the Caja del Rio now.

...BUT A WIN FOR THE BUFFALO TRACT

In April, the Department of Interior took a historic step in protecting the cherished Buffalo Tract and Crest of Montezuma in southern Sandoval County. The public land order withdraws approximately 4,200 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands from mineral development for the next 50 years. This action comes after years of tireless advocacy by Indigenous tribes, local communities, and conservation organizations who have long recognized the immense ecological and cultural significance of this landscape. Our congressional delegation continues to work to pass legislation to make this permanent.

Top left: The mostly dry bed of the Rio Grande. Photo by Tricia Snyder

Middle left: Bighorn ram in the Gila. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock

Lower left: San Antonio Creek in the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Photo by Akashia Allen

Top right: Trespass cattle in the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Photo by Penny Bennett

Middle right: Diablo Canyon in the Caja del Rio. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock

Lower right: View toward the Crest of Montezuma and Buffalo Tract. Photo by Lauren Mach



How you can support the work of New Mexico Wild

MONTHLY DONATIONS

The easiest way to support New Mexico Wild is through a convenient automatic monthly donation from your credit card, debit card, or directly from your bank account.

ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE

New Mexico Wild offers the *Aldo Leopold Circle* to show our appreciation for members who donate \$1,000 or more each year.



LEGACY GIVING/BEQUEST

You can use a bequest in your will to contribute to New Mexico Wild and leave a lasting legacy for the protection of our public lands, wildlife, and water.

GIFTS OF STOCK

A gift of appreciated securities (stocks) is an easy way to make an impact today and may offer you additional tax advantages.

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS (DAF)

Your charitable DAF dollars are a great way to invest in the important work we do every day.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION (QCD) FROM YOUR IRA

By making a QCD distribution of funds from your IRA, you can make a gift that may be excluded from your taxable income.

REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS (RMD)

You can designate New Mexico Wild to receive these distributions from your retirement plan.

MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS

Check to see if your company offers a matching gift program.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Support wilderness by giving an honor or memorial gift on behalf of someone who loves public lands.

FUNDRAISERS

Rally the support of your friends and family by fundraising for New Mexico Wild through Facebook or the GoFundMe charity.

NUSENDA CREDIT UNION MEMBERSHIP

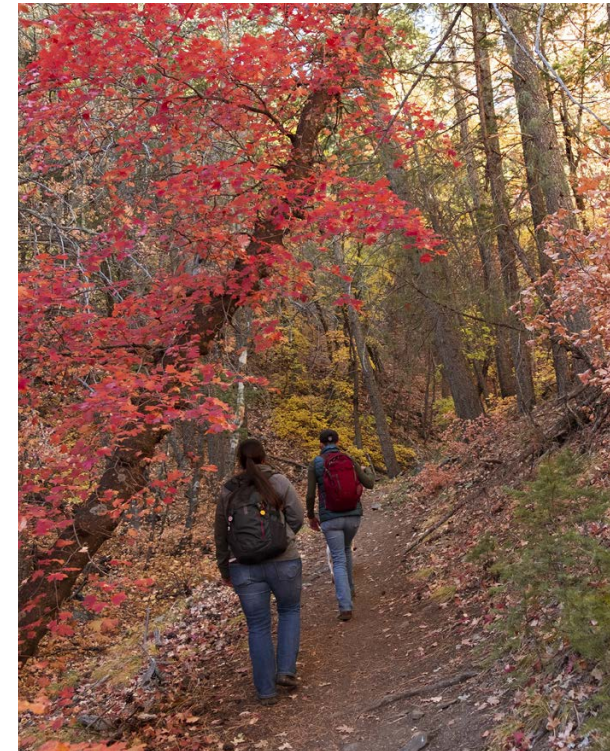
Members can receive a cash reward for credit card purchases, and this is matched by Nusenda if you make New Mexico Wild your charitable preference.

VOLUNTEER

There are many ways you can support New Mexico Wild as a volunteer. Visit our website for volunteer opportunities and application.

DAVE FOREMAN WILDERNESS DEFENDERS

If you would like to help monitor our wilderness quality lands, check our website for how to join this group of volunteers.



How we work to protect New Mexico's wilderness, wildlife, and water

Wilderness Protection

We work to upgrade the status of public lands by developing long-term legislative or administrative protections as well as providing studies on which public lands have the greatest potential for wilderness status and biodiversity values. This includes place-based campaigns, grassroots organizing, and advocacy with elected officials.

Wilderness Defense

We work to improve the management of public lands. This includes a range of legal oversight and “watchdog” activities to hold agencies continuously accountable for managing public lands consistent with relevant statutes, regulations, rules, and plans.

Wilderness Outreach, Education, & Stewardship

We share the love of the wild. This includes public outreach, volunteer programs, stewardship, and outings to expose all ages to the wild heritage of our public lands in New Mexico.

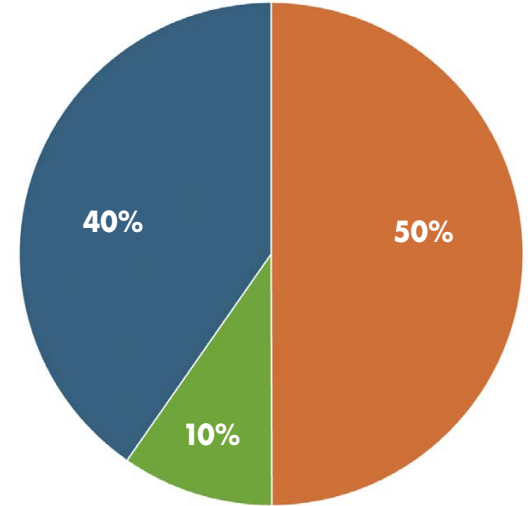


TOTAL INCOME

FY 2024*

\$3,536,820 (100%)

- Grassroots Donors **\$1,766,800**
Includes local grants, memberships, contributions, bequests, and other income
- Government **\$344,507**
- Foundations **\$1,425,513**
Includes national grants and contracts



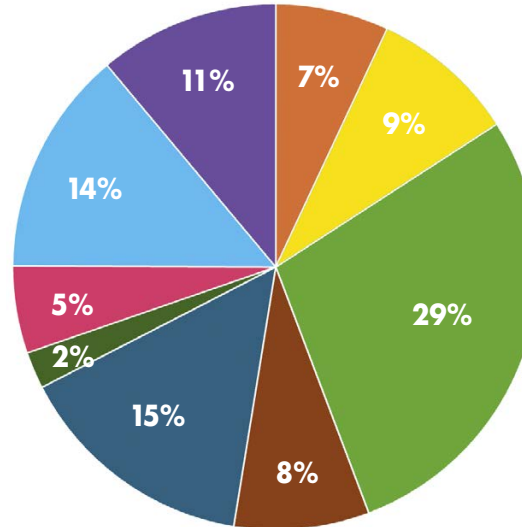
*Unaudited: 10/1/2023 - 9/30/2024 Consolidated

TOTAL EXPENSES

FY 2024*

\$3,536,820 (100%)

- Administrative **\$246,404**
- Fundraising **\$314,746**
- Outreach, Education & Stewardship **\$1,003,619**
- Wilderness Defense **\$294,173**
- Wilderness Protection **\$526,192**
- Friends of Rio Grande del Norte **\$80,267**
- Native Land Institute **\$189,427**
- NM Wild Action Fund **\$489,824**
- Operating Reserves **\$392,168**



*Unaudited: 10/1/2023 - 9/30/2024 Consolidated

Defending Nature

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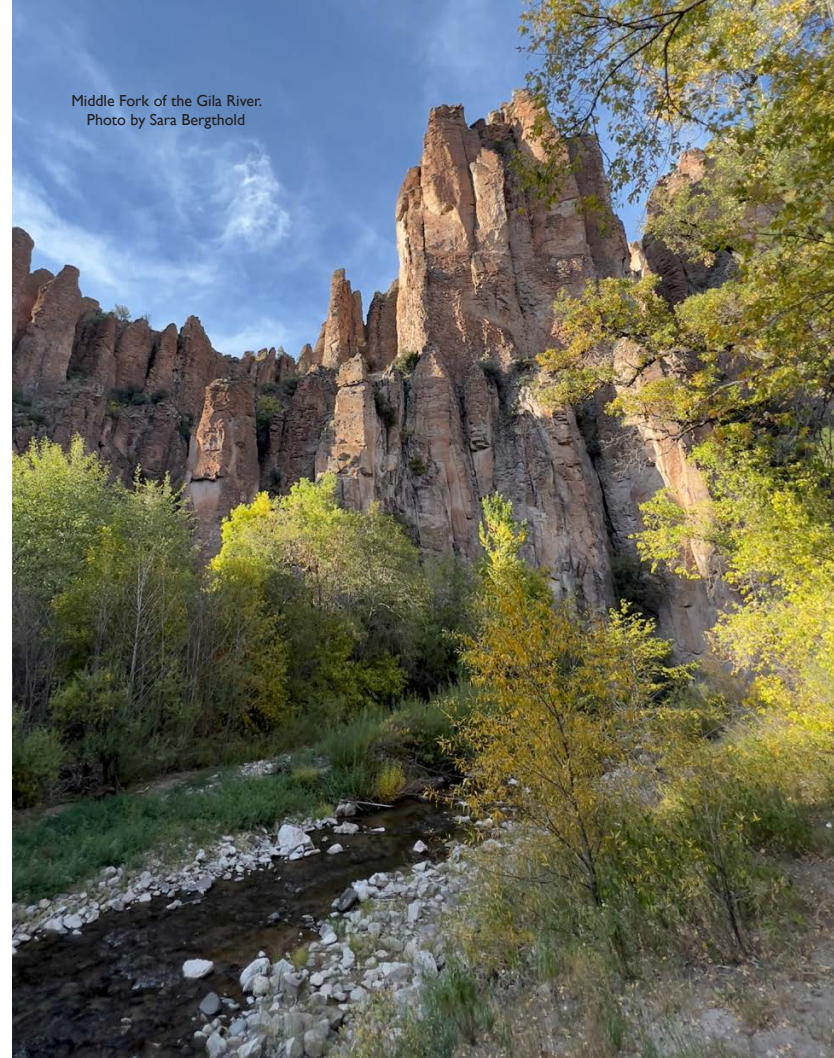
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Middle Fork of the Gila River.
Photo by Sara Berghold



The Gila Wilderness is a 558,014-acre (872-square-mile) part of New Mexico's Gila National Forest. The designation of wilderness is the highest form of protection available at the federal level. New Mexico has 39 wilderness areas with the Gila as its largest.

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The Mogollon Box
Staff photo

The Mogollon Mountains traverse an arc across the wilderness. The tallest peak within this range, Whitewater Baldy at 10,895 feet is in the northwest part of the wilderness along with several other summits more than 10,000 feet high. At the northeast corner is the prominent Black Mountain rising to 9,287 feet.

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Kayakers enjoying the Gila River.
 Photo by Jaimie Park

Wilderness areas allow camping, horseback riding, rafting, hunting, and fishing but permanently protect an area from roads, development, logging, and new mining claims.

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The Gila River from above.
Photo by Michael Melford/National Geographic

The Gila Wilderness features the Gila River, one of the last undammed rivers in the country. The Wilderness contains the West Fork, Middle Fork, and much of the East Fork of the Gila River. Riverside elevations of around 4,850 feet are the lowest in the wilderness.

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Above right: Invasive thistle removal in the Gila Wilderness by one of our Wilderness Rangers. Staff photo
 Below right: Wilderness Rangers using a crosscut saw in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness. Staff photo



WILDERNESS RANGER STEWARDSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

1320 Citizen Scientist Volunteer Hours

65 Miles of Trail Cleared

298 Logs Cut

1253 Stewardship Volunteer Hours

133 Illegal Campsites Dismantled

136 Community Scientists Engaged



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White nosed coatiundi.
Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock



Gambel's quail drinking.
Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock



Bobcats playing.
Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock

The Gila Wilderness is home to predators such as the bobcat and cougar. Mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, black bear, collared peccary, gray fox, bighorn sheep, and white-nosed coati are also found in the wilderness.

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Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument.
Photo by Laima M. Swanson



The wilderness area was once home to the Mogollon culture, a prehistoric Native American civilization known for its cliff dwellings, some of which can still be seen at the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. These ancient structures provide a glimpse into the lives of the people who once thrived in this rugged environment.

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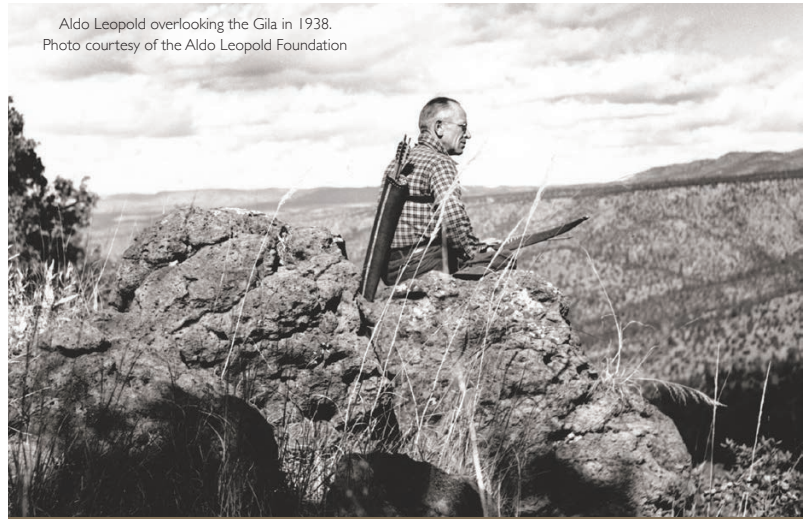
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Aldo Leopold overlooking the Gila in 1938.
 Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation

The Gila Wilderness became the focus of conservation efforts thanks to the pioneering work of Aldo Leopold. A forest supervisor for the U.S. Forest Service, he recognized the need to protect the area from overdevelopment and advocated for its preservation. In 1924, his efforts culminated in the designation of the Gila Wilderness as the first wilderness area in the United States, marking a significant milestone in the history of conservation.

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Bathers enjoying one of the Gila's many hot springs.
Photo by Krystyna Gonzalez

The 1964 Wilderness Act proclaimed "a wilderness...is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled (self-willed or unhindered) by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

The Dave Foreman Wilderness Defenders Program

Through this program established in the name of one of our most visionary activists, these dedicated volunteers work in designated natural areas in New Mexico, helping to monitor Wilderness values and conditions.



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 Arnold and Virginia Wise
 Jan Wiste, MD
 Carol Witham
 David L. Witt and
 Bonnie Schermerhorn
 Sylvia Wittels and
 Joe Alcorn
 Robert Wofford
 Blair Wolf
 Jon Wolfe
 Tracey Wolfert
 Howie Wolke and
 Marilyn Olsen
 Bruce Wollens
 Michelle Wolpert
 Margaret Wong
 Janet and Harold Wood
 Tom Wood and
 Ann Wood
 Vikki Woodruff
 Anita and Craig Woods
 Crystal Woods
 Trudi B. Woolsey
 Robert and
 Julie Workhoven
 Scott Workinger

Cheryl Wright
 Dave Wright
 Fred and Florence Wright
 Karen Wright
 Shawn Wright
 Susan Williams
 Tom Williams and
 Ralph Wrons
 Bryan Wyberg
 Bryn Wynne
 Ann Yalman
 Judith Yandoh
 Dean Yannias
 Lynne Yaple
 Tristen Yazzie
 Glenn Yocum and
 Emelie Olson

Ann Young
 Christina Young
 Christopher Young and
 Lisa Ellis
 Kathryn Young
 Phillip Young
 David Zaber
 Helen Zagona and
 Raymond Trompler
 Zahren Robinson Family
 Fund
 John Zarola
 Andrew Zawadzki and
 Lisa Bumkens Zawadzki
 Risana Zaxus
 William Zeedyk

Kurt Zeitler
 Robert Zeller and
 Becky Wittenburg
 Charles and Mary Zekach
 William Zenger
 Elizabeth Ziers
 Jeff Zilka
 Charlotte Zimmermann
 Drs. Carley and
 William Zorumski
 Mary and
 Raymond Zouhar
 Clark and Agnes Zrakovi
 Linda and Bill Zwick

**NUMBER OF
 ADVOCACY
 ACTIONS
 11,032**

Gary Vessels-Pankow
 Tom Videen
 Ramona Vieira
 Marcos Samuel Vigil
 Marjorie Viguers
 Carter Vineyard
 Virginia Wellington Cabot
 Foundation
 David Vogel
 Greg Vogel
 Tyler Volk
 David Vollmer
 Max Vollmer
 Ariadne Von Huene
 James Von Loh
 Veronica Wabbington
 Andrew and
 Constance Wadsworth
 Justin Wagaman
 Neil Wagner
 Wagner Family Charitable
 Fund

Gregory Walland and
 John Peterson
 Derek Wallentinsen
 Terri and David Wallis
 Paul Walmsley
 Jim Walsh
 Patricia Walsh
 Robert and
 Lynn Waltman
 Christine and
 Paul Wantuck
 David and
 Marianne Ward
 Kenneth Ward
 Patrick Ward and
 Deborah Detorie
 Richard Ward
 Tedd Ward Jr.
 Anthony Warmus
 Beverly and
 Richard Warnock
 Bruce Edwards Warren



Mexican gray wolf.
 Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock.

The Gila Region supports several small packs of the rare and endangered Mexican gray wolf. This keystone species was hunted to near extinction, but New Mexico Wild and many partners have worked for decades to restore them to sustainable population levels.

NEW MEXICO WILD STAFF

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Wilderness Wrangler, Las Cruces

Tricia Snyder

Rivers & Waters Program Director, Albuquerque

Suzanne Soto

Finance Manager, Albuquerque

Nick Streit

Friends of Rio Grande del Norte Coordinator, Taos

BJ Trejo

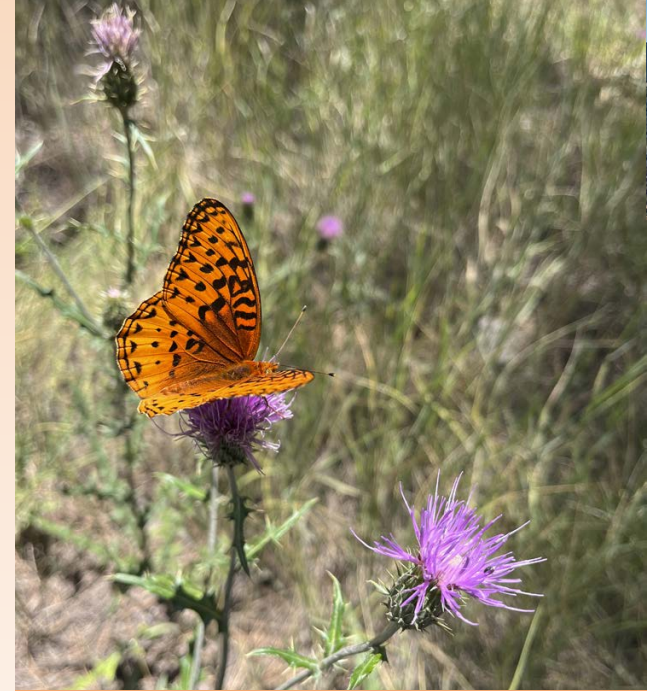
Southern New Mexico Grassroots Organizer, Deming

Garrett VeneKlasen

Northern Conservation Director, Taos

Ralph Vigil

Northern New Mexico Organizer, Pecos



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NEW MEXICO WILD is proud to have
a Four-Star Rating from Charity Navigator
and a Gold Rating from GuideStar.



Three More Opportunities to Enjoy Our Wildlands

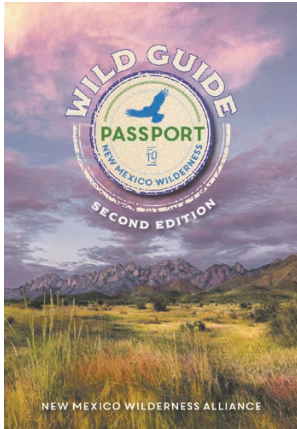
New Mexico Wild has created guides for you to access the best wild areas of our beautiful state.

Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness, Second Edition

This comprehensive guide to New Mexico's protected wildlands is the only book that features each of the state's designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas as well as other treasures such as the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks national monuments. This second edition has been updated to include New Mexico's 13 new wilderness areas, which were established in March 2019 when a federal public lands package became law.

Part hiking guide and part reference book, the *Wild Guide* can help you discover our best public lands.

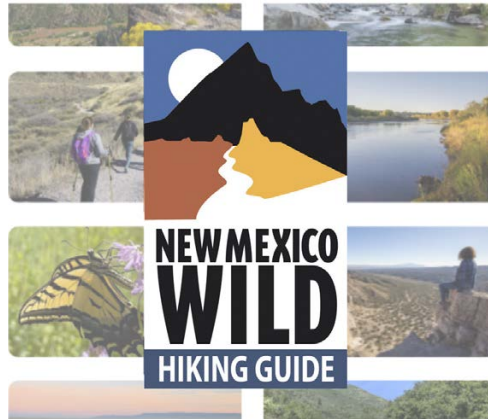
You can order the *Wild Guide* on our website: nmwild.org/shop.



New Mexico Wild Online Hiking Guide

The public lands of New Mexico contain some of the best hiking trails in the nation. The gems among those trails are found in our 39 wilderness areas. We've collected 100 of the best hikes in these pristine areas for this online hiking guide. You can select trails through a variety of filters and then print out trail information to take along. Then add a trail report when you are back and let us know about your experience!

You can register to use the New Mexico Wild Hiking Guide for free at hike.nmwild.org.

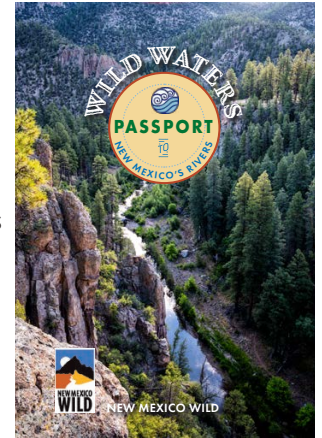


COMING THIS SPRING...

Wild Waters: Passport to New Mexico Rivers

The *Wild Waters* guide is both a printed and digital companion to New Mexico Wild's *Wild Guide* and presents 20+ of the most important river segments in New Mexico. This is a must-have for anyone who shares an interest in the wildlife, geology, cultural and historical values, river protection, and recreational opportunities that these rivers provide.

We will announce the availability to members when the guide is available.





WILDERNESS LEGACY FUND

SUPPORTING NEW MEXICO WILD

New Mexico Wild's Wilderness Legacy Fund provides a way for donors to protect our public lands far into the future.

The fund is designed to accept gifts through bequests and other planned giving methods, but outright donations are welcome. The Legacy Fund is ideal for unrestricted gifts because the future needs of the organization may change, and unrestricted gifts offer the greatest flexibility. However, restricted gifts for a specific purpose may also be accepted for the fund with approval from the New Mexico Wild executive director.

If you would like to donate to the Wilderness Legacy Fund, please contact Tisha Broska, Deputy Director, New Mexico Wild, tisha@nmwild.org or 505-321-6131.



Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock

NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

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Albuquerque, NM 87110

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Field office in Silver City

NMWILD.ORG



The legal name of New Mexico Wild is the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, a nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of New Mexico with its principal address of P.O. Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125-0464.

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