

July 5, 2011



### NMWF conservation project on Rio Grande makes progress

An effort by NMWF and two federal agencies that will **provide better public access to the Rio Grande near Santa Fe and clean up a long-neglected area along the river** has taken a major step forward. Santa Fe National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management are seeking comments on the merits of proposed improvements at Buckman and Diablo Canyon, a historic site about 12 miles northwest of Santa Fe, that will transform the area into a haven for anglers and other recreational users ([click here](#) to read the plan).

**New Mexico Wildlife Federation proposed the project** in 2006 and has been working with the U.S. Forest Service and the BLM to plan the effort, now known as the Buckman Restoration and Recreation Enhancement Project. NMWF has been leading this effort since its inception and will take a lead role in implementing the plan once it is approved, said NMWF Conservation Director Alan Hamilton. (*That's Alan at left, throwing a stick for his dogs to retrieve at the Buckman site.*)

The area, located at the end of Buckman Road, is the site of Santa Fe's new water diversion project. A century ago Buckman was a town where the "Chile Line" railroad stopped and a bridge over the Rio Grande brought timber from the Pajarito

Plateau. Buckman is the only area in Santa Fe County on the Rio Grande that is easily accessible to the public. **It has tremendous recreational and educational value** but unfortunately it is now being used primarily for parties and illegal shooting. The reclamation project will clean up 34 acres along the river that are marred by litter and trash, replace nonnative plants such as salt cedar with cottonwood and other native species, install vehicle barriers to protect riparian habitat and provide picnic shelters and a launch ramp for canoes and kayaks. The plan also will make recreational and restoration improvements in nearby Diablo Canyon, a haven for rock climbers.

Please take a moment to look through the Buckman plans, then **voice your support for an effort to reconnect New Mexicans with the Rio Grande**. Support from sportsmen like you is crucial. [Click here](#) to send an e-mail to Santa Fe National Forest saying that you support the Buckman Restoration and Recreation Enhancement Project.

### Game Commission to pick up where it left off in June

**The State Game Commission meets Thursday, July 21, in Clayton.** The agenda includes numerous items postponed from the June meeting in Las Cruces, including a review of the Open Gate program. The commission also will consider a department proposal to **refund the general hunting license fee for unsuccessful Big Game Draw applicants**. The refund was not part of Senate Bill 196 (which requires all big game hunters to also hold a general hunting license), and it isn't clear what effect the refund will have on department revenues because no one knows what effect SB 196 will have on draw applications. Department Director Tod Stevenson told the commission in June that he promised Gov. Susana Martinez he would get the refund approved in exchange for her decision not to veto the bill.

**Also up for commission action** are possible amendments to the state trapping rule, rescinding the commission's previous decision to ban certain kinds of traps in the Gila region, and a proposed one-year easement for recreational access to State Trust Lands. [Click here](#) to read the agenda. [Click here to read and comment on proposed changes](#) in the State Trust Land agreement, Open Gate, trapping rules and several other issues under consideration.

### Northeast NM sportsmen seek better representation

Sportsmen in northeast New Mexico are not happy that they **still do not have a representative on the Game Commission**. Gov. Susana Martinez appointed a Tucumcari rancher and member of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, Scott Bidegain, to the District 4 seat, prompting complaints from sportsmen who don't think they have adequate representation. There has not been a Game Commissioner from Taos, Raton, Mora, Las Vegas or any of the smaller communities in the northeast in recent memory. [Click here](#) to read one sportsman's letter in the Taos News.

### Bighorn sheep herd shows signs of stress

The last time the Game Commission met in Clayton was in May 2006, when Leo Sims was chairman. At that meeting the commission approved the **transplant of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep to the Dry Cimarron area, but never notified the public** that the sheep were bound for state lands on or adjacent to a ranch owned by Sims' aunt and uncle. According to the minutes of that meeting, Commissioner Tom Arvas made the motion to establish the Dry Cimarron transplant program, "the boundaries of which will be defined by the Department working with the Commission Chairman [Sims], local citizens, landowners, and sportsmen." The commission approved the program without objection.

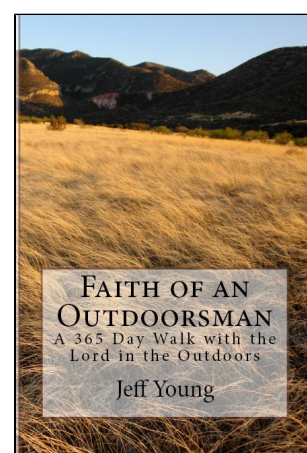
Sims has since taken control of the ranch. Last year he got the State Land Office under then-Commissioner Pat Lyons to give him a 50-year lease on the 1,000 acres of state land he leases adjacent to his deeded land. The new lease **specifically blocks public access to his leased state trust lands**, some of which have a state highway running through them. He apparently also has put out feeders, attracting much of the bighorn herd, according to Department of Game and Fish reports. Department staff surveyed the herd last November and found that four of the five groups of bighorns they found were at or near feeders. They also estimated that 41 percent of the previous year's animals had died, possibly from disease. Feeders are known to be vectors for disease and increased predation.

### Bingaman bills would improve access to public lands

Hunters and anglers would see **improved access and better habitat protection on public lands** under a pair of bills brought to the U.S. Senate by Sen. Jeff Bingaman and others. Bingaman recently introduced S. 1265, which calls for fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund that was established by Congress decades ago as a way to share the wealth of offshore oil and gas drilling revenues around the country. Because Congress often diverts a portion of the annual revenues, Bingaman and others in Congress have tried repeatedly to get the funding permanently dedicated. Bingaman also is working with Sen. Max Baucus of Montana on a companion bill, S. 901, that would require 1.5 percent of the Land and Water Conservation Fund be used to enhance access to existing federal lands for hunting, fishing and other recreational uses.

### Local hunter/angler pens devotional for outdoorsmen

Sandia Park sportsman **Jeff Young has published a book of stories and reflections** (*right*) based on his experiences hunting and fishing throughout New Mexico and Colorado and shaped by his faith. "**Faith of an Outdoorsman, A 365 Day Walk with the Lord in the Outdoors**" is a 365-day devotional for sportsmen, Young says, containing a wide range of outdoor stories along with scripture and outdoor tips. Young said he was inspired by the backcountry stories of New Mexico sportsmen like the legendary Game and Fish Director Elliot Barker. Taking it a step further, Young said, "I felt there was a need (even if it was just for me) to connect the passion I had for the outdoors with my faith." Young plans to donate a quarter of the book profits to four of his favorite nonprofit organizations: NMWF, Trout Unlimited, World Vision and Fathers in the Field. [Click here](#) to order a copy online, or get Jeff to autograph one at a book signing at Charlie's Sporting Goods in Albuquerque from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, July 22. In the future, "Faith of an Outdoorsman" will be available at bookstores throughout Albuquerque.



### Outdoor skills instruction on tap for youngsters

Outdoor enthusiasts from 10 to 14 years old are invited to the first-ever **Great Outdoors Camp** at Eagle Nest Lake State Park this month. It's an opportunity to learn a range of outdoor skills, from archery and fishing to boating safety, outdoor cooking and pellet-gun shooting. The camp is free and runs daily from 9 a.m. to noon July 10-15. The camp will be conducted by the Eagle Nest Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Eagle Nest, New Mexico State Parks and the Department of Game and Fish. There are openings for up to 40 youths. Pre-register by calling (575) 377-2420 or (800) 494-9117.

### In the news

**Vermont sportsmen got a big boost** when their governor recently signed a bill that, according to Field & Stream writer Hal Herring, essentially "codifies the old North American Model of Conservation principle that wildlife belongs to the people, to be managed by the states with the people's consent." Gov. Peter Shumlin said he made a mistake last year when he signed wildlife legislation slipped into an appropriations bill. In June he nullified the previous bill, which had stripped the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department of its authority to manage what sounds like high-fence hunting operations and essentially turned over ownership of wildlife to the high-fence operators. Shumlin then went a step further, and inserted language in the bill that "the fish and wildlife of Vermont are held in trust by the state for the benefit of the citizens of Vermont and shall not be reduced to private ownership." [Click here](#) to read Herring's story.

**The National Shooting Sports Foundation has donated \$150,000** to supplement congressional funding of the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), which supports waterfowl management nationwide. This year's payment is part of a five-year foundation initiative that will provide \$750,000 to support wetlands conservation. "In order to ensure the strength and sustainability of our nation's wetlands, it is imperative that NAWCA be well-funded," said Dale Hall, chief executive officer, Ducks Unlimited. "This generous donation from the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and NSSF's larger commitment to wetland conservation, will go a long way in helping to guarantee that our culture of hunting and fishing is passed down to the next generation."

### New Mexico Conservation Calendar

**New Mexico Muskies Inc. holds a day-long fundraiser** Tuesday, July 12, at the Fuddrucker's restaurant near I-25 and Jefferson (4855 Pan American West Freeway NE). A percentage of all sales referred by New Mexico Muskies Inc. that day will go back to the chapter – but only if you tell the wait staff that the sale is for NMMI.

**If your group has an upcoming event of interest to sportsmen**, post it on the New Mexico Conservation Calendar, a free service of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. E-mail the information to [nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org](mailto:nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org) or call (505) 299-5404.

### Pass it on

**If you appreciate receiving the Sportsman's News Roundup**, please share this newsletter with a friend and ask them to get involved by joining our Sportsman's Alert network. New Mexico sportsmen need to stay involved to ensure our hunting and fishing traditions continue. **And please make a contribution to NMWF**. With sportsmen like you, we can continue to make a difference. [Click here to donate now](#).

#### About the New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Founded in 1914 by sportsman and conservation pioneer Aldo Leopold, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation is New Mexico's first and most effective conservation advocate. We are dedicated to protecting New Mexico's wildlife, habitat and outdoor way of life. We spearheaded permanent protection of our hunting and fishing rights in the Valle Vidal, and stopped cold the previous sell-off of your public lands. We believe that the best way to get things done is to build consensus with common goals.

Our key priorities are: Opportunity Habitat Youth

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