

OUTDOOR REPORTER

New Mexico Wildlife Federation

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The Outdoor Reporter is a biannual publication of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, a nonprofit organization working to protect the rights and traditions of New Mexico hunters and anglers since 1914.

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It Takes A Village: Nature Niños In Action

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New Mexico Hunting and Fishing Guides Continue to Offer Services During Pandemic

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Cover Photo by: Gabriel Vasquez

DIRECTORS MESSAGE:

Jesse Deubel, Executive Director, NMWF

FALL 2020

As we near the conclusion of calendar year 2020, I don't know many New Mexicans who are sad to see this year end.

Despite a great start, the end of the first quarter introduced us to a global pandemic none of us could have imagined. While businesses suffer and unemployment soars to record levels, the social and political divisiveness assailing our state and this country remains on full display. For years we've known those who support vaccinations and also those referred to as anti-vaxxers. Now we hear about masks vs. anti-maskers.

Despite the rift that exists among the people of this great nation, one thing that has proven unifying is our love for public lands. With the overwhelming, non-controversial and bipartisan passing of the Great American Outdoors Act [GAOA] this summer, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been fully funded -- permanently!

To New Mexicans, this means that we can vie for our share of \$900 million every year to acquire and improve public lands. In our state, the LWCF already has funded projects such as acquisition of the Valles Caldera and improvements to Tingley Beach and local parks and ball fields. Passage of the GAOA is a huge win for all New Mexicans and the NMWF would like to thank the members of our congressional delegation for supporting this monumental bill.

Shortly after the passage of GAOA, the American Conservation Enhancement Act passed unanimously. Collin O'Mara of the National Wildlife Federation said, "The ACE Act confronts systemic challenges facing wildlife by restoring essential wildlife habitat like wetlands and the Chesapeake Bay, fighting chronic wasting disease in deer and elk, and removing invasive species."

The ACE Act passed by a "voice vote," meaning not a single member of Congress opposed it. It's difficult to put into words how impactful and impressive these wins for conservation are. These are the tools that will ensure that our children and our grandchildren will have the ability to enjoy wild places and wild animals in the same ways that we have.

As instrumental as these victories are for the future of public lands, waters and wildlife in New Mexico, we still have much work still to do. We must pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act [RAWA]. One-third of all U.S. wildlife species are already imperiled or are vulnerable -- and nearly one million species worldwide are at risk of extinction.

Habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, disease and severe weather all have taken a severe toll on birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and bees. All types of wildlife are declining -- in many cases dramatically. If we are serious about saving thousands of at-risk species, we must invest in collaborative, on-the-ground solutions that match the magnitude of the wildlife crisis. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is the bipartisan solution we need.

More specific to New Mexico, we must also pass the M.H. "Dutch" Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The NMWF soon will release a short video explaining why this bill is so important for those of us who cherish hunting and fishing in the Gila.

More than ever, public lands, waters and wildlife are proving to be non-partisan issues. If anything positive has come from the COVID-19 crisis it's an improved appreciation for the outdoors. New Mexico's forests, BLM Lands, State Trust Lands and State Parks are experiencing record numbers of visitors. People want to be outside.

So, get outside and cherish our shared public resources, and please do it responsibly and respectfully. If you see trash pick it up. Leave it better than you found it.

Follow the words of the founder of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Aldo Leopold, "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."



New Mexico Marks Passage of Great American Outdoors Act

By Ben Neary,
NMWF Conservation Director

ALBUQUERQUE -- The American people marked a great conservation victory this summer when President Donald Trump signed into law the Great American Outdoors Act.

The National Wildlife Federation, together with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and other state affiliates nationwide, have campaigned for decades to achieve full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The new law achieves that and also takes the critical step of putting up billions of dollars to address overdue maintenance needs at federal facilities nationwide.

“The Great American Outdoors Act is the most significant outdoors legislation in a generation,” said Jesse Deubel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. “It guarantees funding that will protect wildlife habitat, conserve public lands and waters and expand outdoor recreation opportunities across New Mexico and the nation. It will also help to address the maintenance backlog at national parks and other federal facilities.”

Deubel said achieving full funding for the LWCF is a landmark achievement in the history of conservation in the United States.

“The New Mexico Wildlife Federation applauds members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation for their hard work in pushing this legislation,” Deubel said. “And we congratulate President Trump on his vision in supporting it. It’s great to see bi-partisan cooperation at the national level on such a critical issue.”

Congress established the Land and Water Conservation Fund in the 1960s to take a portion of revenues from off-shore energy production and use the money to conserve important lands around the country. While the LWCF Act authorizes the fund at an annual level of \$900 million, Congress has routinely appropriated only a portion of that amount, diverting the rest into other programs.

The new law ensures that the LWCF will receive the full amount of funding, giving conservation efforts nationwide

“The Great American

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significant outdoors

legislation in a generation”

a critical boost. In New Mexico, the LWCF has funded such critical land acquisitions as the Valles Caldera National Preserve in the Jemez Mountains and the Valle del Oro National Wildlife Refuge south of Albuquerque.

Federal law specifies that not less than 40 percent of the money in the fund goes to the states every year and at least another 40 percent is allocated by Congress. Generally, Congress uses money in the fund for major land acquisitions while the state share often goes for more modest projects such as acquiring land for parks and ball fields.

In addition to full funding for the LWCF, the Great American Outdoors Act funds will provide up to \$1.9 billion a year for five years to address deferred maintenance issues at our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other public lands.

“The Great American Outdoors Act is a truly historic, bipartisan conservation accomplishment that will protect wildlife habitat, expand recreational opportunities, restore public lands and waters, and create good jobs,” said Collin O’Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation.

“Time and again, our leaders have shown that conservation can not only bridge the partisan divide, but also put Americans back to work and safeguard wildlife and our way of life for future generations,” O’Mara said. “Congress should build on this bipartisan achievement and jump-start our economic recovery by passing additional job creating measures such as a 21st Century Conservation Corps and the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act.”

Fifty-six years ago, the National Wildlife Federation worked closely with Interior Secretary Stewart Udall and leaders in

Congress to secure the initial passage of the LWCF program. It has worked since then to increase funding and programmatic impact.

Speaking at a recent event organized by the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, New Mexico Wild and other groups, Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., the former interior secretary's son, thanked fellow members of the state's congressional delegation for their roles in passing the legislation.

Sen. Udall remarked that he remembered attending the recent groundbreaking at the Valle del Oro National Wildlife Refuge. "Just south of Albuquerque, it's the first urban wildlife refuge in the Southwest," he said. "Lots of people were there that day, especially friends of the Valle del Oro and residents of south Albuquerque that helped spearhead the project."

The Valle del Oro, lying along the Rio Grande, attracts waterfowl and other birds. "The \$6 million contributed from the LWCF helped make this urban oasis a reality," Udall said. "Valle del Oro represents the future in conservation. The public space introduces young people, often Hispanic young people with limited means and limited access to nature, to the out-of-doors. So this place isn't

just about protecting the environment and birds, it also helps right the scales of environmental justice that can help spark in Albuquerque youth a lifetime connection to the natural world. That's what LWCF is all about."

Nationwide, the United States has a \$19-billion backlog in deferred maintenance on public lands, Udall said. The amount in New Mexico is \$121 million.

Speaking at the same event, Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., emphasized that the LWCF funds projects that run the gamut from the Valles Caldera National Preserve down to ball fields for kids.

"And the great thing about the Great American Outdoors Act is not only did we finally accomplish what many people thought was politically impossible by fully funding LWCF, but we also included an enormous infusion of infrastructure dollars for campgrounds and trails, all the things that we care about," Heinrich said. He said he was pleased to see the focus of the bill expand from just National Park Service lands to include wildlife refuges, national forests, U.S. Bureau of Land Management lands and others.

Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., said it was critical to get the bill through the House without any amendments. He said veterans' organizations recognized the importance of the bill and mobilized hundreds of thousands of members nationwide to lobby for the legislation.

Rep. Xochitl Torres Small, D-N.M., said she's benefitted from LWCF funding her whole life. She said she was married at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, which was purchased through the program, and learned to shoot at a range that likewise was funded through it.

Rep. Deb Haaland, D-N.M., said the Great America Outdoors Act will help fulfill obligations to future generations.

"If we are fortunate enough to be in leadership positions where we can vote on legislation such as this, we better take that opportunity," Haaland said. "We better think about the kids who are born today, the future generations, who are going to carry out the work that we really need to have carried on. Because without our planet, we don't have anything, we have absolutely nothing."



Photo: Ray Trejo, NMWF's Southern New Mexico outreach coordinator, stands with Rep. Xochitl Torres Small at an event supporting the Land and Water Conservation Fund



CONGRESS KICKS OFF GILA WILD AND SCENIC RIVER BILL

BY BEN NEARY,
NMWF CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

One of the West's last free-flowing rivers is moving a bit closer to permanent protection.

A bill to protect 450 miles of the Gila River and its tributaries under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act got its first hearing before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in mid-September. The hearing sets the stage for more action on the bill in Congress next year.

Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, both New Mexico Democrats, are co-sponsoring the bill, called the "M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act."

Salmon, an ardent conservationist, was a fierce defender of the Gila River. He was also a frequent contributor to the New Mexico Wildlife Federation's "Outdoor Reporter" magazine before his death last year.

Both Udall and Heinrich testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining. They emphasized that the Gila is the last free-flowing river in the West and deserves full federal protection.

Heinrich said the legislation would protect some of the most dynamic and spectacular rivers and streams in our country. Designating the rivers as wild or scenic under the federal law would restrict activities that would change their character.

"The Gila and San Francisco Rivers are the beating heart of Southwest New Mexico," Heinrich said. "They're home to some of the most spectacular places in the West. Full stop."



San Francisco River, a tributary of the Gila

GILA WILD AND SCENIC

CONTINUED

Udall said the greater Gila Watershed -- including the San Francisco River and other main tributaries -- comprises the largest remaining network of naturally flowing river segments in the Southwestern United States. He said it provides unique outdoor experiences for families, including wildlife habitat, and the foundation of a rural economy that includes farming, grazing and recreation.

“Designating the river as Wild and Scenic will protect abundant cultural resources and the integrity of this important water source and existing traditional uses to make sure future generations can enjoy the Gila like we and so many generations of New Mexicans have,” Udall said. “We must take action to protect it. Designating portions of the Gila River and its watershed as Wild and Scenic will protect one of the nation’s most iconic and treasured river systems, as well as support the booming outdoor industry in that part of the state and the agricultural economies that rely on it.”

Both senators said in their testimony that they had been friends with Salmon. They said the river legislation was the result of many years of advocacy from local community members who want to see their rivers protected.

Salmon had served as chairman of the Gila Conservation Coalition, a group that continues to fight to protect the river.

The coalition was instrumental in beating back a recent proposal to build a diversion system to take about 15,000-acre feet of water per year out of the Gila River for irrigation. The coalition said taking the water out of the river would be harmful to fish and wildlife and harm the river’s wild character.

New Mexico is entitled to the water for the diversion project under federal law. Yet, despite years of effort, proponents failed to devise an economical plan for the project. The federal government this year pulled its support for the diversion and it appears likely that some \$70 million in remaining project funds will go instead to other water projects in southwestern New Mexico.

“We named the bill in honor of my friend Dutch Salmon, a writer, an angler, conservationist, and the Gila’s most ardent defender, who passed away last year,” Heinrich said. “The Gila is wild and free today, undammed and undiverted in no small part because of Dutch’s decades and decades of work to keep



it that way. This legislation will make sure that it will stay that way for generations to come.”

Udall said others in addition to Salmon had worked for years to protect the river. “Sen. Heinrich and I have both spent time on the river and in the Gila wilderness, the nation’s first wilderness. We’ve been working on this legislation for two years, and introduced this bill at the urging of New Mexicans from all walks of life who also value this jewel of the Southwest.”



Alaska Hunting Trip Gives New Mexico Hunter Time to Reflect

BY JESSE DEUBEL, NMWF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Flying In

As the small bush-plane flew over the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, reality set in. I was about to be dropped off alone in one of the most remote areas of North America. The caribou tag in my pocket became irrelevant as the enormity of the upcoming challenge transitioned from a “hunt” to an “experience.”



All Alone

As the sight and sound of the bush plane fades, the silence and solitude demand attention. Standing on the tundra staring at a small pile of gear including one 13-pound deflated raft is quite humbling. Internally, fear and excitement compete to win first place in my current emotional state. I struggle to employ reason to fight them both back. I need to get organized. I hope I haven't forgotten any critical gear. No matter what I might need over the course of the next few weeks, this pile of gear I brought and the offerings of this landscape are all I have.

The River

The river is beautiful and deceptively powerful. The water is crystal clear and ice cold. The cobblestones covering the bottom are worn smooth from the relentless flow. Traveling on the surface of this waterway is drastically different from traversing the tussocks, brush thickets and dark pine forests lining the banks. At times this seems ideal, like a gift certificate for free transportation provided by nature. At other times, the river seems angry and resentful of my presence. It makes every effort, and sometimes succeeds, to punish me for attempting to ride its current.



Predators and Prey

As I round an oxbow in the river, commotion to my right catches my attention. I see a pack of wolves tearing at a female caribou's belly. The wolves and I recognize each other's presence simultaneously and the pack silently melts into the willows with a fluidity that causes me to question whether they were really there. The caribou lunges toward me with her hide flapping in the river's current confirming the wolves were real. The caribou looks at me as though asking for help. I recognize the irony as I am reminded that I am also a predator and my intent is also to kill a caribou. The caribou watches desperately as my small raft floats around the bend. As soon as I'm out of sight, I know the wolves will return.



Meat Care

As a human predator, I have been granted the ultimate burden. I have been tasked with the responsibility of navigating morality. In the words of Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, "One does not hunt in order to kill. One kills in order to have hunted." I hunted, I killed and now I must focus my attention on proper care of this animal's meat. The meat is all wrapped in high quality game bags. I have constructed a pallet using paracord and lodgepole pines so I can elevate these bags inches above the surface of the ice-cold water. Lightweight tarps shield the meat from the sun and capture the cool air allowing it to circulate around the meat motivated by the movement of the water below.

Reflection

After spending nearly three weeks and traveling roughly 200 miles alone through the remote interior of eastern Alaska, I was ready to return home to New Mexico. I missed my family. The soreness in my body stopped just a few days after being dropped into the Alaskan bush. The physical demands of the trip were tremendous, but the emotional and psychological challenges were even more difficult. With a global pandemic contributing to unprecedented uncertainty around the world, I felt significant guilt for having departed my professional and familial responsibility to pursue a purely personal goal. The goal was not to kill a caribou, but rather to have hunted my way through a harsh landscape in an environment of pure self-reliance. Like the path of the river, there were plenty of twists and turns along the way. As the river finds its way to the ocean, I will find my way to the next adventure.



NEW MEXICO HUNTING AND FISHING GUIDES CONTINUE TO OFFER SERVICES DURING PANDEMIC

By Ben Neary,
NMWF Conservation Director

ELEPHANT BUTTE _ Fishing guides at Elephant Butte Lake have been hit especially hard by the pandemic this year. One guide there wants state residents to keep in mind that guided trips there are an option for next year that offers top-notch fishing action.

Joel Pierce, owner of Bent Rod's Guide Services, recently invited New Mexico Wildlife Federation staffers to experience the fishing at Elephant Butte.

State government orders closing state park campgrounds in response to the pandemic -- as well as orders requiring anyone coming into New Mexico from out of state to quarantine -- resulted in many cancellations from Texas anglers who make up much of the usual customer base there,



Fishing Guide Joel Pierce at the wheel of his boat



Jesse Deubel holds a bass

Pierce said.

"It hurts our business," Pierce said of the restrictions on out-of-state visitors. "I'm going to say probably a third, or maybe more, of our people, our clients, come from El Paso. And yeah, we've had to cancel a bunch of trips with people from out of state."

Other factors affecting bookings for guides on Elephant Butte this year included low water levels. Water continues to drop as a result of dry conditions upstream and continued releases to meet downstream obligations.

Pierce and other guides also had to contend with limits on hours of operation this summer, including being prohibited from launching before 9 a.m. for a while.

"So, the quality of the fishing for our clients wasn't as good," Pierce said of the hour restrictions. "And whenever you don't perform for them, they tend to not want to come back. So, all of that tends to impact our business in a reverse way."

Jesse Deubel, executive director of the NMWF, and I met Pierce in Truth or Consequences early on the morning of Aug. 7, a day that had high cloud cover but little wind.

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REP. XOCHITL TORRES SMALL: GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT A WIN FOR NM

BY CONGRESSWOMAN XOCHITL TORRES SMALL (NM-02)

Growing up in southern New Mexico, I've long appreciated our public lands and beautiful outdoors, learning at a young age that our public lands are deeply ingrained in our state's character and heritage.

In Congress, New Mexico's public lands have provided entry points for collaboration and finding common ground regardless of party labels. During my first two years in Congress, I'm proud to have worked with both Democrats and Republicans to protect and conserve our precious water resources, wildlife habitats, and support our growing outdoor economy.

This summer, the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law – a result of decades of hard work and collaboration, with New Mexicans from across the state fighting to get this bill over the finish line. The landmark legislation fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and will help address our maintenance backlog at places like White Sands National Park and Carlsbad Caverns National Park and provide critical upkeep at our local parks.

Congress was also able to deliver a victory for hunters, anglers, and conservationists across New Mexico by passing the bipartisan America's Conservation Enhancement Act to support our public lands and wildlife. I'm proud to have fought to get this legislation to the House floor and to have worked with Senator Heinrich, who introduced the legislation in the Senate.

These latest accomplishments prove that as much gridlock as there can be in Congress, our public lands can be a uniting factor. Working as part of a coalition to protect sites with special significance to central and southern New Mexico serves as a reminder of why I decided to fight for unique needs in Congress and what it takes to get those needs met. It is an honor to represent my home, New Mexico's Second Congressional District, and I will continue to fight to protect our public lands and way of life for generations to come.



TAG SOUP FOR DINNER AND HUMBLE PIE FOR DESSERT

By Jesse Deubel, Executive Director NMWF

The deadline to apply for New Mexico Draw hunts for the 2020-2021 hunting season was March 18, 2020. Applying for my annual hunting preferences is one of the [very] few tasks in life I tackle without procrastination. My applications were submitted long before Covid-19 became a household reference. Years of planning meant that I would be spending the month of August in Alaska's Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve pursuing a bull caribou from the 40-Mile Caribou herd. With such a hearty chunk of time-off accounted for, little time was left for other hunts.

I have not drawn an archery elk tag in NM since 2015 and my dreams of spending two weeks chasing bull elk with my bow would have to wait another year. I could not afford to take two weeks off in September after being gone for nearly all of August. I decided to apply for an elk hunt that I almost certainly would not draw, but if I did it would only occupy 5 days, including a Saturday, Sunday, and a federally recognized holiday.

The draw was beyond generous to me and I drew a rifle, mature bull elk tag valid October 10-14 in the Gila. The hunt unit was the same one I drew in 1995 when, at 15 years old, I killed my first elk with a bow. I took two beautiful spring gobblers from this unit in April. I had seen countless elk while turkey hunting. When the draw results came out, my plans to hunt caribou had



pretty much faded due to the pandemic.

In late July, luck was on my side and the caribou hunt was placed back into motion. Upon returning from that trip, my mind immediately returned to my October elk hunt. This was the first rifle tag I ever held for a bull elk. I have taken bulls with my bow and cows with a rifle, but this tag was different.

In a conversation with a friend prior to leaving for the hunt I said, "This is simply crazy! I cannot even believe they issue rifle tags in early October when the bulls are bugling. And the unit is huge considering how few tags have been issued. They have to issue so few tags because success must be near 100 percent."

"Don't jinx yourself!" My buddy laughingly replied.

On opening morning, I headed out from camp in the dark. When I reached the rim of a deep canyon I sounded off with a high-pitched bugle. A bull responded from the opposite ridge and then immediately after another bull responded to him. My excitement spiked. Without hesitation I bailed off the rocky rim, down towards the bottom of the canyon in their direction.

My descent in the near darkness of pre-dawn might be best described as a combination of jogging, skiing and sledding. Upon reaching the canyon bottom, I bugled again to reassess the location of the bulls. They cooperated as if following a script. Adrenaline carried me up the opposite slope.



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IT TAKES A VILLAGE NATURE NIÑOS IN ACTION

BY SARAH CANDELARIA, YOUTH PROGRAM MANAGER

As COVID-19 has spread a sense of uncertainty in our communities throughout New Mexico, Nature Niños has taken a stance to ensure that resources are available to support a system for families and community members to rally together as a “nature village.” Together, we are raising our niños up to overcome current difficulties and challenges. Together, we are providing children with a sense of continuity and normality in a world that is ever changing.

Nature Niños, an initiative of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation (NMWF), offers a variety of programming that encourages the use of nature as a source of stability, a steadfast resource that never changes, a pillar of strength that we can lean on to get through these trying times. By providing resources to our families and teachers, we are raising their confidence to support local children and youth with experiences and adventures in nature.

FAMILY COMES FIRST

Family always comes first! The Nurturing Your Young Child with Nature series, led by NMWF Early Childhood Coordinator, Sally Anderson and in partnership with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, is designed for families with young children who are just learning how to explore nature and the outdoors together, either because they did not often experience the outdoors as children themselves, or because they did spend their childhood outdoors and want their own niños to have a childhood rooted in the awe and wonder of the natural world. The program is also ideal for parents who embrace the idea of slowing down childhood, by minimizing screen time and maximizing connection, all while enjoying the simple pleasures of being a child. Childhood should be about predictable routines and rituals, which can include enjoying books and stories together; taking the time to drop into deep, nurturing play; picnics in the park; walks in the neighborhood; worm hunting and puddle splashing. Young children should get a consistent dose of “Vitamin N”--and most importantly, have a joyful and playful connection to both nature and the adults who care for them on a daily basis.

After families feel comfortable exploring their own backyards and neighborhood parks, they can take the plunge into exploring the beyond! Our team member, Kristina Roybal has heard from families who want to go on hiking adventures, but they don't know where to start. So each Friday, Nature Niños distributes hiking information especially for our families with young children. We do all the research, so busy parents don't have to, and detail all the in's and out's of some of the most family friendly hikes in New Mexico. We let families know the bathroom situation, the ability to take a stroller or not and things like how much shade is available for the many breaks needed for little legs. Each Take A Hike Friday resource also includes fun scavenger hunt items to find while hiking, and fun facts about the landscape, watersheds and wildlife in the area.

At Nature Niños, we are not afraid to venture outside the box a little, so we are offering resources during COVID specifically for parents who are interested in homeschooling. Homeschool Homies helps families explore the option of homeschooling their children, rather than returning in-person to school or virtual classes. While respecting all schooling decisions, we are here to guide families who do have an interest in homeschooling by highlighting the fact that math, history, science and English lessons can be done outside in the fresh air! So grab a blanket and your new favorite read and join us under a big shade tree for our school lessons!



In addition, be on the lookout as we are expecting a Fall 2020 launch of our Nature Niños Bosque Explorers Conservation School, a supplemental school experience for homeschooled & public school students that is 100% outdoors!

ENCOURAGING EDUCATORS

Knowing that educators are also valuable members of our village, we are offering a training course that is sure to inspire! Our Nature-based Early Childhood Training & Certification Program, designed for professionals working with young children (in NM and beyond), will launch in September. This year-long course, led by Sally Anderson and co-facilitated by Dr. Yu of UNM, with contributions from Dr. Ruth Winslow, NMAEYC, Explora, and National Wildlife Federation ECHO team, will assist professionals in learning how to use Nature as a 3rd Teacher. Outdoor-learning increases health, creativity, problem-solving, and social-emotional growth in young children, which is one of the many reasons why there has been a steady increase in Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens in the US over the last 10 years. This training program, which entails one Zoom lesson module per month for 12 months, along with an individual, supported “Harvest Project”, will equip early childhood professionals with the tools and pedagogy that will allow them to “bring nature in” and “get children out”, to both the nearby, and beyond. There will be a certification option, as well as an opportunity to take most of the modules independently. An additional 6-month training is already being designed for those who wish to incorporate a “Forest Fridays” component into their existing program, or start their own Forest Kindergarten

NATURE NIÑOS EXPERIENCES

When COVID-19 hit, it became evident that we had to pause in-class experiences for New Mexico’s youth, and so we quickly adapted to the times. Starting in March, Nature Niños began offering a weekly Backyard Nature Series via Zoom that engaged youth from K-8 with nature in their backyard. With the help of some amazing community partners - adding to our “village” - we were able to share various topics with children, like pollinators, reptiles and insects, phases of the moon, plant identification and nature journaling. When the Backyard Nature Series wrapped up, we quickly launched The World is Our Classroom, where we spend time exploring nature beyond backyards. Each lesson ends with a variety of activities that we encourage the kids to get outdoors and try, for example; taking a nature walk to identify pollinators, creating a cloud in a jar, identifying animal adaptations and making their own nature journal to document their findings.

Another offering is our Nature Stories & Signs with Miss Sally. Sally worked for decades as a Teacher of the Deaf, and here she connects her passion for nature with American Sign Language, teaching a few basic signs each week in line with the weekly story.

What’s next for Nature Niños? We hope to partner with our Pre-K-12 schools in helping public school educators to get “todos los niños” outdoors to learn, explore, and wonder together, regularly. We are not sure yet how this will look, but we know it is a task we are able to undertake. We will also be formalizing our relationship with SOL Forest School, based in the forested mountains east of Albuquerque, to serve as a model program for early educators wanting to learn about Nature & Place-based education, and as a model for potential expansion into the greater Albuquerque area. In addition, we are examining our existing programs for barriers to equitability and inclusion, aiming to raise up the voices within our community to allow for increased access to nature for all. One way we will do this is introduce a monthly “Friendly Forest” component that will be designed for children who have developmental disabilities and/or who are differently-abled. We are hoping to win funding and/or start a scholarship to allow for a greater number of families, niños, and educators to access all that we offer (and hope to offer). Working as a village, we know that the open, endless southwestern sky is the only limit, and that anything is possible.



TAG SOUP FOR DINNER

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As the morning sun broke over the horizon, both bulls bugled within 100 yards of my position. The dense forest of pinon pine and juniper greatly limited visibility. Conditions were astonishingly dry, so moving quietly was almost impossible. I used some cow calls to entice the bulls to come to me. They responded with unnervingly close bugles, but still I could not see either bull. The breeze was light, but in my face. The sun rose further, and the forest became silent. Again, I cow called. My calls were answered by silence. I waited ten minutes and then bugled. The only response was an echo from the opposite canyon wall.

I had envisioned exactly how this hunt would transpire and my vision was almost perfectly realized. My vision was so clear that I could see the bulls in my mind although not with my eyes. Despite their silence in the rising heat of the day, this hunt was exactly what I anticipated it to be. Over these five days I would utilize the crisp mornings and cool evenings to call in rut-crazed bulls. When the right situation presented the right bull, I would notch my tag, endure the pain of the pack-out and fill my freezer.

I knew where these bulls were. I would quietly back out and return later in the day when the temperatures allowed these majestic animals to be more active.

Hours later I picked my way through the thick pinon-juniper forest to get into position to resume the game of chess that had been paused by an 80-degree October day. Just yards before reaching my destination, I caught the movement of a bull elk thrashing a juniper tree.

The bull caught my movement at the exact same moment. He froze. I shouldered my rifle and flipped up the scope covers. His body was huge. He was broadside about 40 yards away. My crosshairs were perfectly still on his hide over his heart. I looked up from the scope to look him over again. His body was magnificent. His dark antlers were obstructed by branches from the tree he was raking and also from trees between us.

His body was unobstructed. I was busted and he was going to bolt. I needed to shoot immediately.

But then, thoughts crossed my mind: "I don't 'need' to shoot. This is the first bull I've seen on the first day of the hunt. What's my hurry? I can't even see exactly what his antlers look like."

I lowered the rifle. As I did, the bull bolted as predicted. Instead of escaping into the thick timber we both occupied, he retreated to the south across a large meadow. His huge rack heckled me as he ran.

The following morning produced a few bugles. Those were the last elk vocalizations I would hear on that hunt. In the days following that encounter, I would see one cow elk that I startled from

her bedding area and one lone spike who wandered past me fewer than 30 yards away. The bull I passed on -- the first bull on the first day of the hunt -- would be the only legal bull I saw.

I am still struggling to process my decision that day. I have never considered myself one to prioritize antler size, but it sure feels like I did that here. I have always admitted to being a "trophy" hunter, but not in the common sense of the word. Rather, every aspect of the hunt is a trophy to me. In this case, perhaps the trophy was four full days spent in the wilderness that would have been cut short had I squeezed that trigger.

Do I regret not shooting that bull? I do. Did I not shoot him because I could not fully see his antlers or because the situation was completely out of adherence to my vision of how the hunt would end? If I had called that bull in and he had been raking the tree and his antlers had still been obstructed would I have shot? I do not know the answers to these questions.

When the bulls went silent the morning of opening day I sat in the shade and turned on my Garmin InReach. I had a message from my good friend and colleague Jeremy Romero of the National Wildlife Federation. The message read, "Take a moment this morning to slow down for a second and notice something you would have otherwise overlooked on the excitement of opening morning. The rest will work itself out!"

My morning had been an adrenalin filled roller coaster. I reread the message and surveyed my surroundings. I observed some disturbed soil in the distance. I went to investigate and found a very impressive underground yellow jacket hive which had been partially excavated by a black bear. I assume the bear was eating the yellow jackets.

The winged warriors eyed me with anger as I snapped a couple photos. That was an awesome moment in nature! That evening I picked quite a haul of juniper berries which I will use to season some caribou tartare. Hank Shaw's book, "Buck, Buck, Moose" turned me on to toasting juniper berries until they are crisp and aromatic and then putting them into a peppermill to be ground over raw venison. I will eat that dish tomorrow. Tonight, it is tag soup for dinner and humble pie for dessert.



Continued from Page 11

NEW MEXICO HUNTING & FISHING GUIDES

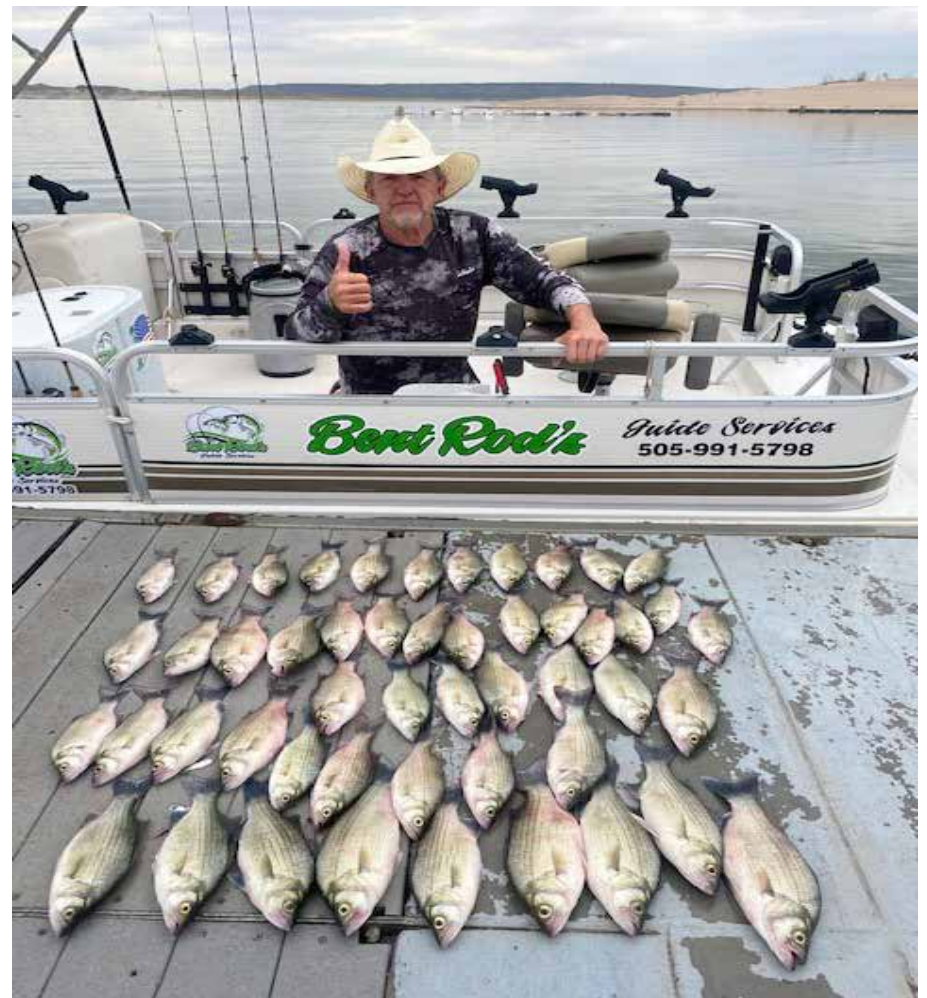
Pierce's boat was meticulously clean and we were well-stocked with spinning rods as we motored across the lake to a spot where he had seen bass the day before.

Pierce scanned the surface of the lake looking for a "boil," the pattern on the water that happens when a school of white bass feeds on a school of shad, a bait fish about an inch long.

It wasn't long before Pierce had us into the fish. As the action heated up, we fished with poppers -- a surface lure that mimicked the shad. It was thrilling to see the bass hit the poppers and then fight doggedly before we brought them to the net.

Catching bass with nearly every cast, we followed the "boil" across the lake. The action heated up even when the feeding frenzy came up against the shore line and the shad had no place to escape.

The fish were raging. Every cast produced fat white bass.



Once Deubel managed to catch two bass on a single cast, hooking one with the front hooks on the lure and another on the back hooks.

Pierce radioed for a fellow guide to come to our location and share in the action. Soon, as the boil moved close to a boat-launching point, we had plenty of company from other fishermen.

By then, however, Deubel and I were close to our limits of 25 bass each. Pierce carefully counted the fish in the coolers and, once we limited out, we called it a day -- all by 10 a.m.

Back at the dock, Pierce used an electric carving knife expertly to filet the bass. We went home with several pounds each of perfectly cleaned filets.

Pierce said he hopes to increase his business's exposure and also let more people in New Mexico know that the opportunity is there to take guided fishing trips at Elephant Butte.

"For a town as big as Albuquerque, we don't get that many clients down here," he said. "I think it's because nobody's really hitting on that clientele up there."

Contact Pierce at Bent Rod's Guide Services, Inc. (Contact information: bentrodsguideservices@gmail.com. (505) 991-5798.



NATURE NIÑOS STUDENT JOURNALS HER EXPERIENCES

Nature October 14, 2020

At the river, I see shade trees, lots of them, and they provide a canopy of shade. There are also patches of sun that create little flickers and slants across the ground. The air smells of freshness and in the distance, you can hear the occasional car. As we walk, under our feet, there is a variety of things including hard packed dirt, loose coarse dirt, soft sand, leaves, and underbrush that crackles under my feet. The mood is calming, relaxing, soothing, and peaceful.

When we reach the river, we wind through some trails that sport some bushes and shrubs, which have over grown branches that smack against my face very softly. At first, the dirt is hard packed, like before, but it quickly changes to the loose sand, only now, it is much deeper. Eventually, we reach uneven, rocky ground, on which you can hear the water of the river, lapping against the bank. A few boys get into the water to move some stones and boulders around. There is talk of building a bridge, and lots of other children are working on a fall scavenger hunt.

After our group crosses the uneven ground, we come to a trail, thickly crowded on all sides with shrubs, bushes, and trees, but wide. I am told it is beautiful and the air smells phenomenal, with the smell of sage, fresh pine, and clean air. It is thick and delicious. I stop to journal periodically. The trail is steep at first, but then, levels out.

Then, it's back down the trail, so far, my favorite part of the walk, and back across the uneven terrain. Now some of the girls get in the water to wade. The adults, all women, gather and chat, while children run everywhere, in the river, in the underbrush, and on the trail. Mothers go with their children to see paw prints, plants, and colors. We hear a dump truck and more cars.

We move to a new section of the river that is much the same as the area before, only the brush is closer to the river. The smells slightly different, like adding water to the mix. Then, we go back on that splendid trail. We hike farther than last time and as we go, the trail gets even more interesting. After a while, the trail opens up into a clearing where we find a spot and sit down to journal. I choose a nice piece of firewood and sit on the ground.

Everyone gets very quiet to pay attention to nature around us. The clearing has trees all around and they make shade and sun patches along the ground. I hear the wind blowing, birds chirping, bees buzzing, cars going, ducks quacking, and children quietly writing with their pencils. As I sit here on this log, I take deep, slow lung fulls of the clean potent air that smells of so many different things, it would be almost impossible to describe. Now, there is sirens in the background on the road. Though they are in the background, they are much more pronounced than the cars were.

After one minute, everyone is instructed to begin drawing and coloring and the mothers begin to quietly talk amongst themselves. As time ticks by, I can tell the sirens that I earlier heard belong to a fire truck and I hope that whoever is in that fire makes it out safely. The sound of cars returns, along with the rustle of leaves on the trees in the light breeze that gently blows. Another bee buzzes past and dogs from a faroff house begin barking. I am brought back to peace and tranquility.

As I wait for everyone to finish their drawings, I feel around on the ground beside my log. I find a few leaves, no surprise, for fall is coming to a close with holidays fast approaching. They are smooth and dry. They have stems and unique shapes, almost like a heart, except the top isn't as pronounced as a heart. There are also twigs, brush, sap, and wood scraps that crackle as mothers and teachers walk over it to help students and children to finish their journals.

After I journaled with the group, we made our way back to our car. I loved the river and trail and would love to go back sometime. I also love nature journaling and will do this more often. Today gave me peace and healing that I needed. I enjoyed my nature walk today.

Shared by Faith, Age 13, Homeschool Student

SPORTSMEN ENJOY EARLY SEASON DUCK HUNT

Matthew Monjaras founded Impact Outdoors with the mission of, "Impacting communities through education, conservation and meaningful outdoor opportunities."

Monjaras recently went on a duck hunt with Army veteran Tyler Sladen. Tyler served in the 1st Cavalry Division, where he was a crewman and a gunner aboard M1A2 Abrams Tanks.

On this hunt, Tyler and Matthew lay beneath the cover of a layout blind with shotguns at the ready as they hoped their decoy spread and enticing calls would lure in the birds.

The timing of this trip was perfect as a variety of species of birds arrived on the cusp of an early storm. Included in the species that were attracted to the decoy spread were American wigeon, gadwall and green wing teal. Although only



Tyler Sladen



Tyler Sladen and Matthew Monjaras relax with their bag of ducks.

a slight breeze was present, the hunters expertly used the light wind to arrange their blinds and decoy spread in such a way that the incoming ducks would cup their wings to prepare to land within shotgun range. Most shots were under 20 yards.

The men had a blast together as they got to know one another while hunting ducks in unseasonably warm weather. It's not often a waterfowl hunter can limit-out while wearing a tee-shirt.

Having filled their limits with a beautiful mixed bag, the sun broke the horizon just in time for Tyler to put his photography skills to work.

If you would like to see more photos from this trip, or from other trips Tyler has photographed, visit his website at sladenphotos.com. For more information about Impact Outdoors and the opportunities Matthew provides for veterans and first responders please visit [im !\[\]\(4b7a79268f6ba26c1471d4232fffa85a_img.jpg\) outdoorsnm.com](http://imoutdoorsnm.com).



THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS JOIN THE NMWF BOARD

Laura Naranjo

Laura Naranjo has spent most of her life in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, growing up in Colorado and Montana and now raising her family in New Mexico. After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado, she launched a serendipitous career as a science writer and graphic artist at a climate research center. At this intersection between art and science, she learned the value of wild habitats and the vulnerability of their ecosystems. Laura currently lives in Albuquerque and works in special education. She spends most of her free time hiking, bowhunting, and volunteering with organizations that champion public lands and wildlife.



Suzanne Wieser

Suzy Wieser believes it's important for everyone who cares about the environment and the outdoors to step up and do their part. Like many anglers, Wieser started out fishing with spinners but made the move to fly tackle. These days, her favorite river is the San Juan, where she says her two dogs like to accompany her on the water.

"With fly fishing, I like that it's much more technical. I'm sure spinner fishing may not say that," Wieser said. "I'm really having to focus on my own skills. But for me, it's really just being out in nature, and seeing wildlife, and having that calmness of it."

Wieser got involved with the NMWF because of her commitment to conserving and protecting wildlife and the environment. "We just have faced so many challenges, especially in the last few years, and the only way we're going to protect it is for each and everyone of use to step in and do something, and it," she said.

When she's not fishing, Wieser works at Bank of America. She graduated from the University of New Mexico and also holds an associate's degree in veterinary technology.



Robert Medina

As a Pueblo Indian, Robert Medina, was taught to respect all things in nature. His desire to protect the fauna and flora of New Mexico began as a Natural Resource student at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. As a former Principal Attorney for the Navajo Nation, he handled complex legal issues for the Nation's Department of Natural Resources. Today, he manages his own law firm handling many legal issues including natural resource protection and management for the Pueblo of Zia. He holds two associate degrees, a bachelor's degree, and a Juris Doctor from the University of New Mexico. He is licensed to practice law in New Mexico, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Navajo Nation. He is an avid hunter, hiker, outdoor and exercise enthusiast.

New Mexico Wildlife Federation Welcomes New Deputy Director, Adrian Angulo

Adrian Angulo joined NMWF as deputy director in October 2020.

Angulo grew up fishing for cochito, pargo, and roncachito in Sonora, Mexico. A first-generation American citizen, he has a strong sense of civic duty and encourages his community to engage in the political process.

Angulo earned his bachelor's degree from St. John's College in Santa Fe. He got his start at the New Mexico State Legislature, where he worked with elected officials to protect our air, land, water, and wildlife in his various roles with the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee and Senate Finance Committee.

Interested in deepening his involvement in community leadership, Angulo began working in political campaigns, where he was tasked with fundraising, event management, Hispanic and Latino outreach, public relations, volunteer mobilization, and engaging diverse local and tribal communities and leaders to support progressive candidates and ballot measures.

In his new role at NMWF, he is excited to build a community of New Mexican conservationists, hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists who care about our public lands and increasing transparency in decision-making processes.

In his spare time, Angulo enjoys woodworking, biking, and hiking with his dog.



CHANGING THE WORLD AND PRESERVING OUR LAND!

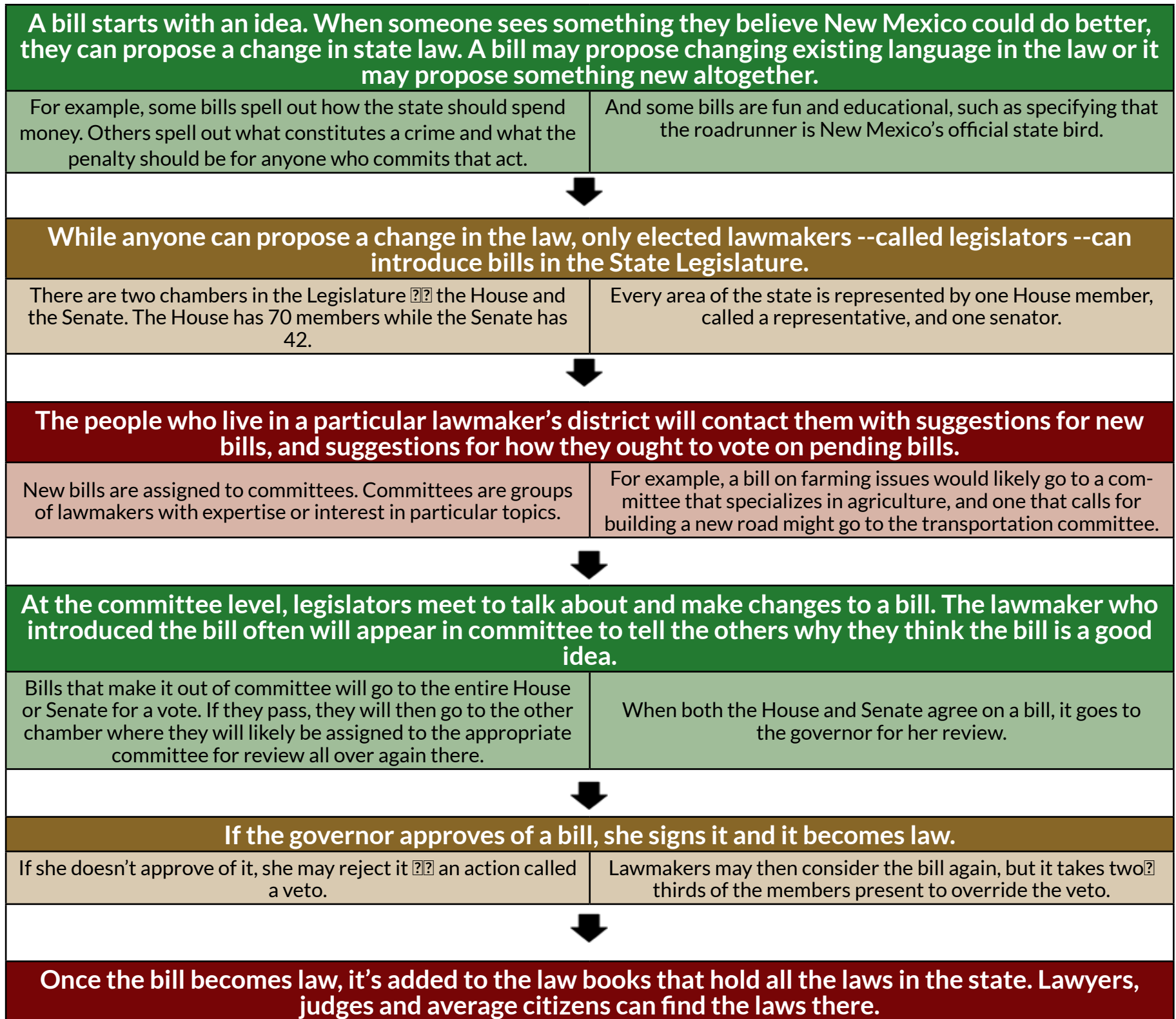
An October morning spent with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation Nature Niños & the American Sign Language Academy Honey Badger Conservation crews cleaning fishing line, pulling algae from ponds, identifying local and invasive plant species with I-Naturalist.



The New Mexico Legislature is set to kick off its General Session on January 19, 2021. From then until the scheduled adjournment on March 20, lawmakers from around the state plan to come together to work on a range of bills that they hope will become laws.



HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?



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