



# San Juan Citizens Report

September 2005

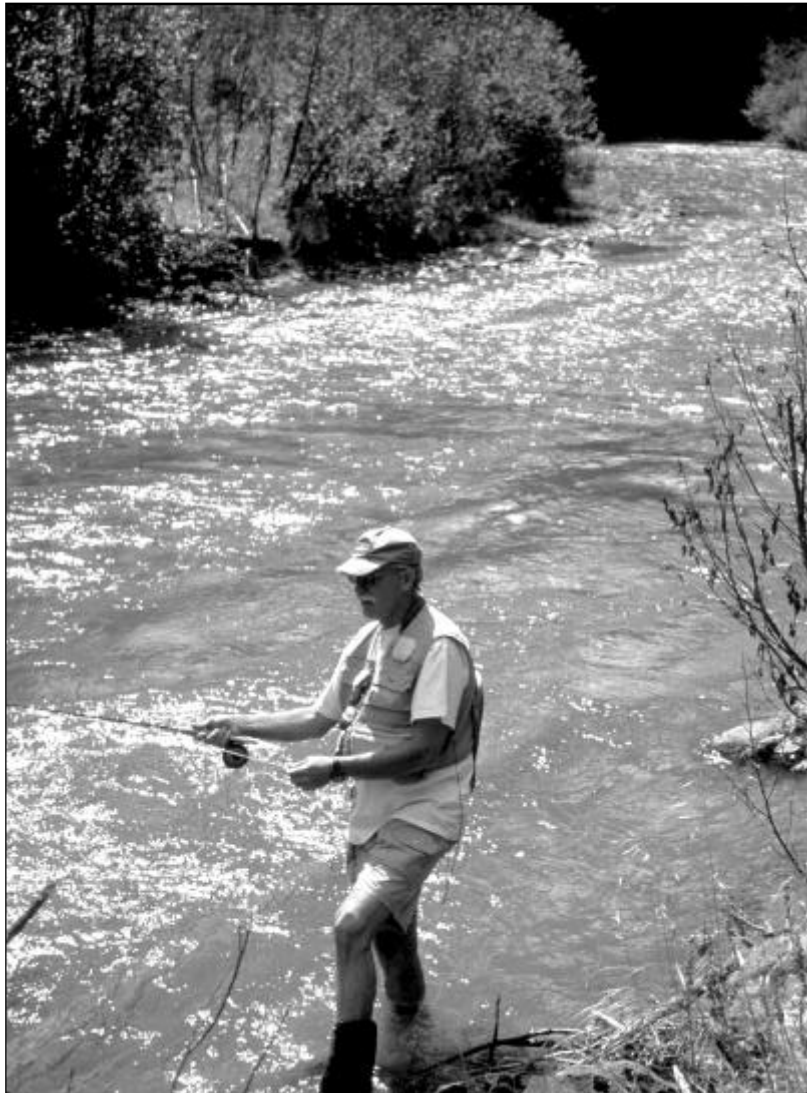
Organizing for the people and land of the San Juan Basin

## San Juan Forest Plan eyes wild and scenic river status

By Mark Pearson

As part of the ongoing revision of the San Juan Forest Plan, the Forest Service is considering dozens of potential Wild and Scenic Rivers. Only one river in Colorado (the Cache la Poudre) is currently protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Rivers thus designated are protected from future dam construction, and the managing agency is directed to secure adequate water for the outstanding values of the river.

The Forest Service first determines what qualifies for Wild and Scenic status, a so-



Mark Pearson

The San Juan River's East Fork is a prime candidate for Wild and Scenic River protection in the new San Juan Forest Plan.

called determination of eligibility. At a later date, the Forest Service will then recommend those streams it believes are suitable for designation after consid-

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## San Juan Citizens Alliance

[www.sanjuancitizens.org](http://www.sanjuancitizens.org)

*The San Juan Citizens Alliance promotes stable communities that actively recognize and respect social and ecological diversity, increase genuine democracy, and foster social, economic, and environmental justice in the San Juan Basin.*

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# View from the Director's Office

By Mark Pearson



I am constantly surprised by the breadth and depth of SJCA's activities. We have fortunately attracted a dynamite staff to support the unmatched dedication of our members and volunteers. Together, we are tackling a spectrum of issues as complex as any among our colleagues.

Dan Randolph has been working non-stop to alert residents to the serious questions raised by British Petroleum's "infill" request to double the density of gas wells across much of La Plata County. At least four other gas companies are waiting in the wings to follow with similar requests for more wells. While some aspects of BP's proposal are encouraging, such as directionally drilling new wells to avoid constructing new pads and electrifying motors instead of noisy diesel engines, other parts are problematic as reported in a separate article by Dan.

Cynthia Bodine has our New Mexico chapter on fire! A half-dozen volunteers helped Cynthia staff our information booth 12 hours per day for the week of the San Juan County Fair in Farmington. We obtained almost 300 signatures on a petition to Governor Richardson urging him to support the landowner protection bill in next year's legislative session. We hope to enact a new law that greatly increases the rights of landowners when dealing with oil and gas companies trying to punch wells onto their land.

In addition to our recently opened Aztec office, we plan to open a new satellite office in Cortez this fall. The office will be staffed by our new Dolores River Campaign Coordinator, Susan Thomas. Susan hails from McElmo Canyon and has a wealth of experience in land use planning, including a stint with La Plata County in the early 1990s when she helped spearhead the county's first-of-its kind oil and gas regulations.

We hosted a summer BBQ and SJCA annual meeting in August at the Lion's Den picnic area in Durango. We had a friendly turnout of 40 folks, and elected our board for the coming year. Please welcome new additions Sug McNall of Aztez, and Chris O'Shea-Heydinger and Patrick Cummins from Bayfield. We said "so long" to long-time board member, and past president, Carolyn Lamb who is taking a well-deserved break, as well as Zadik Lopez, our Los Compañeros board member, who has moved to Denver to take a new job.

The coming year promises great excitement for SJCA, both organizationally and issue-wise. We now have offices in the Durango-Cortez-Aztec triangle, which should greatly increase both our visibility and our effectiveness. We will need all our efforts as we work to enforce responsible energy development, achieve protection for the wildlands and wild rivers of the San Juan Basin, and encourage a safe and hospitable society for all.

# President's Corner

By Janine Fitzgerald

I am thinking about energy. I go to the pump and spend 33 dollars for 11 gallons of gas. I am dependent on my car to get me to and from work and the grocery store even though I see the ravages of gas drilling, read about the destruction of cultures and ecosystems because of oil drilling, see the impacts of global climate change in weird weather patterns and hurricanes. I read in the New York Times Magazine and National Geographic about the supplies of oil reaching their peak in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Nigeria. I listen everyday to new causalities from the war. I know that production from individual gas wells has been steadily declining in the San Juan Basin for the past several years. I watch as oil companies make mad dashes to drill more wells in order to keep supplies steady while telling us that this will mean more gas over the long term. I watch as our county government ignores the wishes of the citizens to make it easier for companies to drill more wells. I watch as our county builds wider highways, more stores and hospitals away from where people live to accommodate the cars that we all continue to believe will always be there -- even as we suffer at the pump. I feel helpless in front of the last mad assault to get every bit of cheap fossil fuel out of the ground in the HD's, in Farmington, in La Plata County, along the outcrop, in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria while leaving behind water contamination and depletion, underground coal fires, deadly gas seeps.

And then I go out and milk my cow. My great grandfather had a dairy. A.J. Reinhardt and Sons (even though his six daughters did all the milking). This summer I learned to milk. I had to visit a neighbor to find a stanchion. I bought a milk bucket from the Amish. I had to find a stump to sit on. My arms fell asleep every night for the first month-but I watched the milk flow into my bucket. I carried the milk into the house, strained it, pasteurized it. I got a cheese making lesson from my mother. I churned butter. I feel very differently about energy as I watch the cow grazing and miraculously turning grass into milk and cow. I watch the calf nurse and know that he will provide meat. I think about my arms doing the milking. I think about adding heat and rennet to make cheese and simple churning to make butter. And then I think, "I don't know how but it may turn out okay".

## Board member profile: Sug McNall



Steve Bodine

SJCA's New Mexico board members Kris Dixon (left) and Sug McNall (right).

By Mark Pearson

One of our most active members in New Mexico, Sug McNall was elected to the SJCA Board in August. Christened "Shirley" at birth, Sug is a native of the San Juan Basin. Her great grandparents settled here in the early 1900's, and Sug was born in Farmington and raised on the family cattle ranch. After graduating from Aztec High School, Sug attended nursing school in Albuquerque, but did not complete the three-year program. She later worked in finance and banking for many years while her first husband worked in the oil and gas business. She lived in the oil and gas "patch" in the Gobernador and Largo Canyon "out-back area" for eight years. Sug helped with various jobs in the gas field and gained firsthand experience with many aspects of the oil and gas industry.

Sug's daughter, Toni, attended remote country schools in the oil and gas patch, so Sug became very active in the school systems both as an employee and as an advocate for better equipment and equal opportunities for the staff and kids in those schools. She served as a member of the State PTA Board.

"My most intense environmental and social

Please see McNall on Page 15

## Water

# SJCA supports a victory for stormwater regulations

By Chuck Wanner

In March, the Alliance in conjunction with the other members of the West Slope Water Network, successfully argued that oil and gas companies must prevent sediment from washing off oil and gas construction sites into Colorado's rivers and streams.

The bureaucratic language is that we persuaded the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission to reinstate so-called Phase II Stormwater rules for construction on small oil and gas sites. These are the same rules that apply to all other small construction sites throughout Colorado. Previously, the Water Quality Control Commission had agreed with the Bush Administration to suspend the requirement that the oil and gas industry comply with stormwater runoff rules while the cost to industry was researched.

In March, the suspension expired. We took advantage of this and once again made our arguments to the Water Quality Control Commission for reinstatement of the rules. This time we got a strong majority in support of our position. La Plata County Board of Commissioners wrote a letter of support, Gunnison County entered as a party. As a result of public and local government pressure, the Water Quality Control Commission voted in our favor. Also, over the past couple of years more and more folks have been complaining of how the industry operates, so there was no real sympathy for not forcing compliance for an industry that is so large and powerful. Most communities require the same measures to be used for almost all construction sites. It is in no way an unfair burden to require similar rules for such a prosperous industry as oil and gas. Colorado's rules are now the strictest in the nation.

As with most environmental victories, this one is temporary. In January of 2006, we will once again be in Denver arguing to protect streams from gas well-pad construction sediment. We and our coalition partners have gathered support from many counties, and Western Resource Advocates has come to our assistance with legal advice. We will present photographic, economic and scientific evidence to support our position. Let's hope that we can once again force multi-national oil companies to obey the same rules required of our local mom and pop construction companies!

# Gravel mining in the Animas: A positive response

By Chuck Wanner

The San Juan Citizens Alliance Water Task Force has been actively working to reduce impacts from gravel mining in the Animas River north of Durango over the past two years, and has recently scored significant progress by eliminating applications by three of the four operating gravel pits!

Most folks do not see the amount of damage done to the river by the four gravel pits that have been operating for decades, but changes in the river channel and the riparian areas are apparent when floating down the Animas.

Fortunately for all of us who care about the river, Mary Gillam, who is a professional geologist, has had an ongoing interest in this issue for several years. Apparently because of the public scrutiny generated by Mary and the SJCA Water Task Force, only one of four operating gravel pits has to date reapplied for a permit: Four Corners Materials, which mines the Bar-D Pit. On Aug. 11, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers office in Durango issued a letter to Four Corners Materials asking it to respond to several questions that the public raised about the application including:

- Investigating other methods of extraction that may be less damaging to the aquatic environment.
- Determining if the operator can aid in the prevention of streambed incision.
- Explaining the rationale for taking a larger amount of gravel and responding to concerns that the proposed operation could cause irreversible damage to the river system.
- Providing a detailed annual remediation plan.

The gravel operator was asked to respond by Sept. 11. We will be interested to see how these concerns are addressed and whether mining will prove economically feasible in the future. Meanwhile, it looks like if mining does continue, it will be subject to much stronger regulation than in the past.

# Wild: Rivers meet scenic criteria

Continued from Page 1

ering trade-offs between future water development and leaving rivers in their wild, natural state.

Thus far, the San Juan NF has identified several dozen qualifying stream segments, including the Animas River, Hermosa Creek, the Dolores River, and the headwaters of the San Juan River. Unfortunately, the agency has omitted several other outstanding rivers and streams, including Ignacio Creek in the HD Mountains, Fish Creek in the Dolores River's headwaters, and Bear Creek.

To qualify, a river or stream must have at least one "outstandingly remarkable" attribute, such as aquatic, fish, recreation, cultural, historic, scenic, geologic or other features. It seems like almost any stream valley in the San Juans possesses outstandingly remarkable scenery, so we anticipate most streams should qualify for that at a minimum.

If you would like more information about the status of a specific potential wild and scenic river segment, contact Chuck or Amber at (970) 259-3583, cwanner@frontier.net or amber@sanjuancitizens.org.

# Join SJCA at Oktoberfest to celebrate beer, brats and the San Juan Basin

**Alpine Bank Sponsors:**

**San Juan Citizens Alliance**

# Oktoberfest

Durango, Colorado

**October 1st & 2nd 2005**  
**Saturday 11:00-6:30**  
**Sunday 9:30-3:00**  
**Durango Downtown Blocks 9th-10th**

*Bierz, Bratz, a Bug and a Little Bull!!  
 see you there - CHEERS!*

**PUB CRAWL - SATURDAY NITE**  
 Pub Crawl passes for all 4 bands available at Southwest Sound - \$20

Carvers	8pm	Lawn Chair Kings
Steamworks	9pm	Felonious Groove
The Summit	9pm	Warsaw
The Abbey Theatre	10pm	Drew Emmitt from Leftover Salmon

**GUTEN MORGEN - SUNDAY BREAKFAST**  
 The JAEGERFRUEHSTUECK (hunters' breakfast) sponsored and served by Coldwell Banker.  
 Adults-\$5.00 Kids-\$3.00 9:30am-11:00am Downtown Durango

**WIN THE OFFICIAL OKTOBERFEST 1970 VW BUG**  
 Sponsored by 1st National Bank & 99.7-99.3 The Point

**"O' Zapft"**  
**"It's Been Tapped"**  
*Kicks off at 11am by Carvers & Mayor Dale Garland*

**Kinderplatz**  
 Family activities by Durango Nature Studies Beer Dunk Tank, Children's Museum Games, The Garden Project Pumpkin Carving and a Klackers Tournament.

Business Improvement District, Denton Signs, Holiday Inn, Lightning Communications, Nink's Paqueria, Skippy's Grill, The Palace, The Rochester Hotel, The Durango Herald, The Durango Telegraph, Waste Management

Brainstorm  
 Century 21  
 Coldwell Banker  
 Colorquest  
 Durango Rewing Company  
 DPR Durango Party Rental  
 First National Bank  
 Point  
 Steamworks

## Energy

# BP's request to increase drilling density raises questions

By Dan Randolph

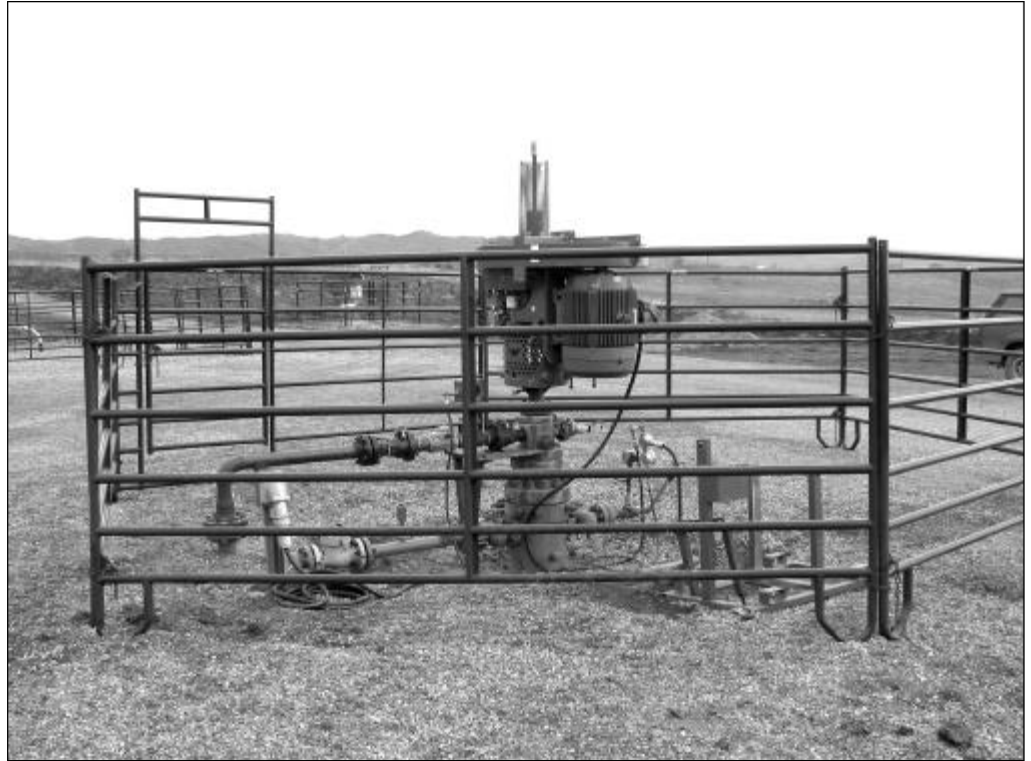
As British Petroleum moves forward with a plan to double the number of wells in a portion of La Plata County, and the county government rushes to assist the company, the true implications for the area go unexamined.

BP currently plans to double the number of coalbed methane wells in approximately 72 square miles between Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio, adding about 250 new wells. Samson Resources, operating in the Tiffany area, plans to add about 150 new wells. There is no question but that these are just the first of what will be a series of industry-driven proposals over the next year or two.

While the move to double the number of wells is not surprising to long-term observers of the coal bed methane industry in the area, the BP proposal has added three significant new twists to an all too old tale.

The first surprise was that BP proposed, from the beginning, to drill the new wells utilizing existing well pads and to use electric motors for well production where they reasonably could meet both of these goals. Both the use of directional drilling to minimize surface disturbance and electrification of motors will benefit a lot of people in the county, and are commendable practices for BP to commit to.

The second twist is the lack of a coordinated request by the industry for the whole area in which they are planning to double the



Mark Pearson

Electric pumps, such as this one at a BP well near Bayfield Middle School, are a welcome requirement in the request for denser gas wells across La Plata County.

wells. In 2000, the industry, led by BP and the Southern Ute Tribe, made a similar request to double the number of wells, from 2 per section to 4 per section, throughout a major portion of the county. By advancing in a piecemeal fashion, the industry is keeping the public at large in the dark about their complete plans. In addition, the process around a more complete proposal would include the public health safety and welfare issues more completely than may occur under a piecemeal approach. Already, Samson Resources is planning on doubling the wells to 8 per section in an area east of Ignacio. We can fully expect a series of such proposals during the next year or two, until most of the gas patch in the county is covered.

The third twist has been the response by county government.

Since the early 1990's La Plata County has worked hard to protect the rights of its residents, landowners, and the rights of the county itself. This effort has met with stiff resistance from both the industry as well as the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission, which is the industry's lap-dog state regulatory agency. The County has entered into an agreement with BP that severely curtails the county's moral and political authority, while basically getting BP to agree to its original proposal for use of existing well pads and electrification.

The result of these three new twists is that serious questions are not being addressed by anyone other than the Alliance and our allies (including the Oil and Gas Accountability Project).

- While the BP proposal is less than three miles from one of

## SJCA scores quick victory on HD gas wells

By Mark Pearson

the area's of most active methane and hydrogen sulfide seeps, right in the middle of south Durango, La Plata County has refused to address how the proposal may increase this huge threat to public safety.

- With the county rolling over and playing dead on issues of methane seeps, loss of water, and potential coal seam fires raised by this proposal, it is leaving these issues until future proposals to increase well density. In doing so, we believe the county is failing to take seriously the long-term threats to public safety and welfare posed by coal bed methane development, and is missing the opportunity to comprehensively handle these issues.

- The piecemeal approach also denies the county, the industry, and the residents the ability to take a comprehensive and proactive approach to land use planning in the gas patch.

San Juan Citizens Alliance will be working on these issues to the extent our resources allow (or even more). Any assistance, whether in pressuring the county, the state, or the industry to step up to the plate more fully, or in any number of ways assisting our work, is both needed and appreciated. Contact Dan at (970) 259-3583 or dan@sanjuancitizens.org.

In our last issue, we reported that the Forest Service had approved the first two wells planned for the HD Mountains. The Alliance rushed into federal district court in Denver to stop the wells. We are pleased to report that we scored a decisive victory, and stopped both wells in their tracks!

In May, the San Juan National Forest approved drilling applications from Petrox Resources for two wells in Fossett Gulch along the eastern boundary of the HD Mountains. The Forest Service authorized both wells without conducting any required environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and even more surprising, while the wells were still under consideration by the not-yet-completed Northern San Juan Basin Environmental Impact Statement (the "HD Mountains EIS"). The Forest Service hoped to avoid environmental compliance by arguing that because the wells involved private minerals underneath federally owned national forest, the agency had no duty to consider environmental impacts.

Fortunately, the U.S. Attorney's office reviewed the facts of the case and quickly decided the Forest Service's opinion was likely a legal loser. SJCA's two Durango attorneys, Brad Bartlett and Travis Stills, were able to readily craft a settlement agreement with the Forest Service and U.S. Attorney that stopped the two wells until the Forest Service complied with NEPA. After the agreement was reached in June, Petrox withdrew its two applications.

However, Petrox has not given up. The company has returned with a permit application to the state oil and gas commission and hopes instead to drill one of the wells on nearby private land. Petrox is presently pursuing approval for this well before both the state commission

Please see HDs on Page 8



Stumps evidence destruction caused by Petrox Resources before SJCA's lawsuit halted preparation for drilling the 10U#3 well in Fossett Gulch.

Mark Pearson

# Hundreds of New Mexicans urge governor to protect landowners

By Cynthia Bodine

Members of the New Mexico Chapter of San Juan Citizens Alliance launched the summer's activities with their Surface Owner Protection Bill Campaign by having house meetings and hosting a booth at the San Juan County Fair to educate the public about property owners' lack of legal rights when there is oil and gas development on their land. The booth gave members the opportunity to talk with hundreds of citizens in the Four Corners area of New Mexico and SJCA was successful in obtaining 270 signatures on a letter to Governor Richardson asking him to put the Surface Owner Protection Bill on his call list for the upcoming legislative session in January. Also during the week at the San Juan County Fair booth, SJCA members distributed flyers for the Public Meeting on Landowners' Rights that will be held on Sept. 29 at San Juan College in room 9010 at 7 p.m.

SJCA members spoke with New Mexico legislators Sen. Neville and Rep. Townsend about the Surface Owner Protection Bill at a roundtable held in Aztec in August. New Mexico conservation organizations have made this bill a priority for the coming year and invited SJCA to present the bill to the legislature's Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee meeting on Sept. 2 in Albuquerque.

SJCA members were busy on other fronts as well. A handful attended a Congressional field hearing where member Tweeti Blancett emphasized the value of the National Environmental Policy Act for protecting the interests of ranchers and other landowners. SJCA members attended three New Mexico Oil Conservation Division meetings to give public com-



Steve Bodine

SJCA New Mexico staffer, Cynthia Bodine, hosts our informational booth at the San Juan County fair.

ments on the need for more inspectors to do quality work, newly elected SJCA Board member provided written testimony to the Legislative Finance Interim Committee meeting, and numerous members contributed input to the Farmington Oil & Gas Commission about the proposed oil and gas regulations for the City of Farmington.

Our Air Quality Task Force has also been active with members attending Governor Richardson's Climate Initiative meeting, the Zero Mercury Stakeholders meeting, and a joint Air Quality meeting where New Mexico and Colorado SJCA members discussed ideas for launching an Air Quality Campaign.

We are very proud to announce that the NM Chapter now has two members on the SJCA Board: Kris Dixon, NM Chapter Task Force Board Member and Shirley McNall, At Large Board Member.

If you live in the San Juan Basin of New Mexico and want to get involved, please call the office at (505) 334-1301 for a schedule of upcoming activities!

## HD Mountains: SJCA scores quick victory to stop dangerous drilling

Continued from Page 7

as well as Archuleta County.

We are working closely with the impacted landowners and Archuleta County government to force a thorough analysis of the environmental consequences from this well. A major concern is that the well is less than 1.5 miles from the Fruitland

Formation outcrop. Drilling wells in locations such as these in adjacent La Plata County has caused methane seeps, underground coal fires, and contaminated homes. We hope to persuade the state and county not to repeat history by approving similarly dangerous wells in Archuleta County.

## Wild San Juans

# A 'dry hole' in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

By Amber Clark

The Cannonball #1-18 well drilled by EOG Resources early this summer (south of McElmo Road, near Hamilton Mesa) turned out to be a non-producing well or "dry hole." This was one of two new wells drilled in Canyons of the Ancients this year that we've been keeping an eye on.

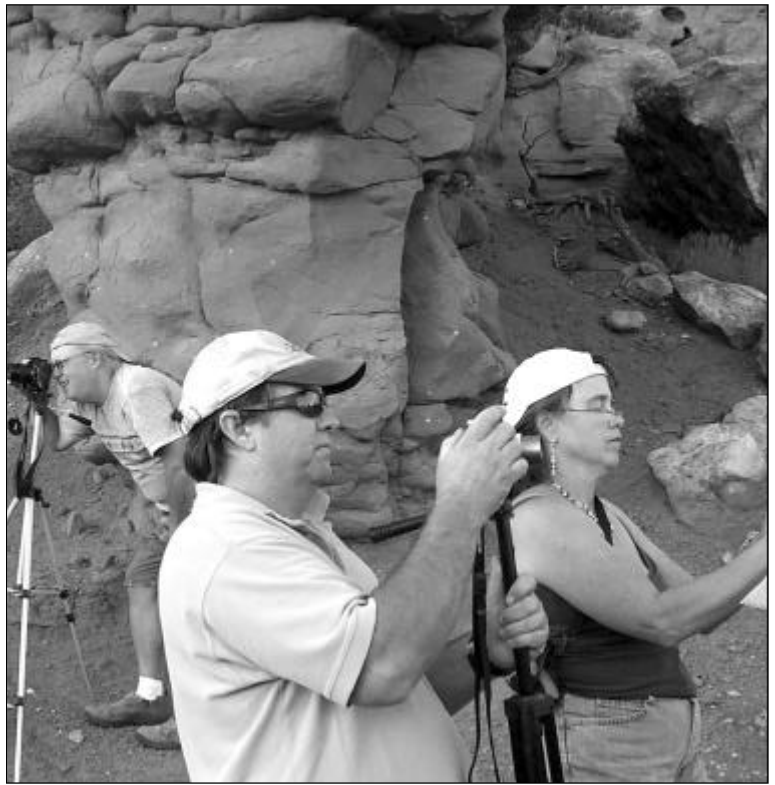
As a result, this fall the company initiated full reclamation of the access road and well pad. The reclamation includes removal of gravel used for road construction, recontouring areas cleared for road and pad construction, reseeding all disturbed areas with native seed, and ensuring exclusion of cattle during rehabilitation. The Alliance will monitor the reclamation progress, holding the BLM to a high standard appropriate for the National Monument.

EOG Resources also had plans for four other wells, two of which were actually approved through the same Environmental Assessment that analyzed the Cannonball #1-18 site. The locations of all five wells were determined based on information gathered during a 3D seismic survey completed in 2002. Cannonball #1-18 was the first well drilled because the company believed it the most likely to produce. EOG Resources has indicated it will not pursue the two other approved sites due to the test results of Cannonball #1-18.

If indeed EOG Resources does not pursue additional wells with-

in their two leases, those leases will expire six months from the date Cannonball #1-18 was capped in August. The, according to the Presidential Proclamation that created Canyons of the Ancients in 2000, the leases will be permanently relinquished, preventing BLM from offering them for lease again in the future. With 85 percent of the 164,000 acre monument already leased when the Proclamation was written, the removal of several thousand acres from drillable lands makes a significant impact on the agency's ability to meet its mandate of cultural and natural resource protection.

In the midst of researching this good news, however, we were very disappointed that the BLM was secretive in creating a so-called "lease unitization" for EOG Resources. By unitizing the leases, BLM reduced the company's burden to hold them. While in some cases this can lead to less development, BLM should disclose such proposals to the public, especially when there is substantial public concern about the



Amber Clark

Participants set up shots with photographer Jeff Widen during a free photo workshop held in the Sand Canyon area of Canyons of the Ancients National Monument on July 27. The workshop was held in celebration of the 5th Anniversary of both the Monument and the National Landscape Conservation System.

impacts from oil and gas development on the fragile environment in Canyons of the Ancients.

The unitization agreement struck out of public view gives EOG the right of "drilling to discovery," which means the company could technically change its mind and drill another well within 6 months. If EOG again drills a dry hole, they would have another six months to drill yet another well. According to the agreement, this could go on and on until EOG drills a producing well.

At this point, we hope EOG arrives at the conclusion that drilling is not economical, which would result in permanent relinquishment of the leases and a big win for the monument.

# San Juan National Forest management plan moves forward

By Amber Clark

With the final round of Community Study Group meetings completed, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management will now go to work creating a draft document spelling out the future management of public lands in southwest Colorado.

After the first attempt at the plan revision process in the late 1990s was cut short, the current effort seems to be off to a better start. We might actually get our overdue revised management plan this time around, but the process is somewhat cloudy.

There is no clear indication of how the agencies intend to use comments gathered from the eight-month public meeting process. They have a massive database of information gathered and a lot of opinions recorded. But the desires of the public must be balanced with the true condition of the land, taking ecosystem and watershed health into account. The public process was focused primarily on how people prefer to use public lands, putting no emphasis on what kinds of management are needed to set the stage for a healthy functioning public lands for decades to come. As the demand on public lands increases, this plan revision process is key in setting that stage.

In addition to balancing the desires of the public with the needs of the land, the agencies also have to complete other determinations such as wilderness suitability of roadless areas and oil and gas leasing suitability, both of which require an Environmental Impact Statement.

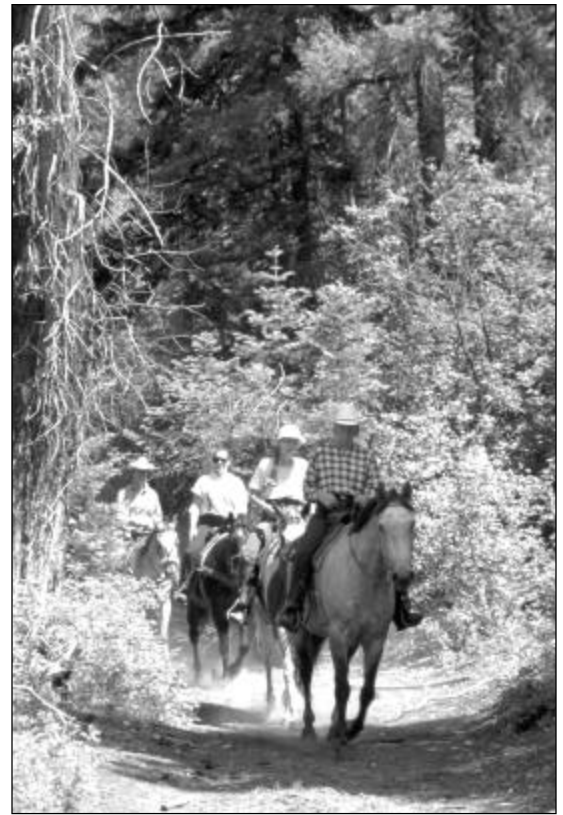
To make the whole situation a

lot more confusing, new planning regulations came down the pipe from the Forest Service on the national level, fundamentally changing how management plans for national forests are created and how they function.

Upon the release of the new regulations, forests that had already entered into the planning process were given the discretion to choose between the old and the new regulations. Under pressure from above, all of the other forests in this region quickly chose the new, but not the San Juan.

The main reason they've deliberated at length stems from the fact that there are concurrent Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service plan revisions taking place. The absence of a required Environmental Impact Statement is one of the major changes with the new forest planning regulations. The BLM is still required to complete an EIS. Since the planning process is one and the same for both agencies, it makes sense to complete one big analysis. Otherwise the Forest Service will have to go back and complete separate analyses for wilderness and oil and gas, and will have a much larger burden to complete in-depth analyses for every single project proposed on the Forest under the new plan.

Other changes within the new planning regulations include a relaxation of standards and guidelines that the Forest Service has to meet. This will result in a less binding forest plan with little to hold the agency accountable to. While the old forest planning regulations were not perfect, they did have



Jeff Widen

Equestrians explore the San Juan National Forest.

standards and guidelines with "though shall" statements and, importantly, they did require that an EIS be completed with a full cumulative impact analysis. We have encouraged the San Juan to use the old planning regulations.

Even though the San Juan National Forest has not publicly announced which regulations it plans to use, it won't be surprising if they choose the new regulations. The new regulations will be a new adventure both for the public looking on and for the agency itself. It seems that even agency planning staff are having a hard time understanding how the new regulations will work and what the implications for the future will be.

In spite of the less than clear path in front of the agencies, they still indicate that we'll see a draft of the new management plans for the forest and San Juan BLM lands sometime this winter.

## Los Compañeros

# Advocating for a progressive policy on immigration

By Jim Fitzgerald

*"Illegals dying at record rate in Arizona desert*

*Immigrant influx leaves more bodies, controversy...*

*In Pima County... so many corpses are waiting to be identified, autopsied and returned to Mexico that the coroner is storing 60 of them in a refrigerator truck." USA Today, Aug. 19-21, 2005*

In the Four Corners, immigrants may not be dying of thirst but they suffer the fear and daily humiliations of any people who feel they are not wanted. These are very difficult times for immigrants – documented or undocumented. In the last few years, the suspicion and hostility towards immigrants has increased greatly. There have been several anti-immigrant bills in the Colorado legislature and there are more to come. Los Compañeros would like to contribute to a community-wide dialogue concerning the shaping of a progressive immigration policy.

The United States desperately needs an immigration policy which is effective and humane. Environmentalists especially need to understand this issue and agree on a policy we can enthusiastically support. Even though the Sierra Club overwhelmingly rejected an anti-immigration proposal, there is still considerable debate about this issue among environmentalists. A recent letter to *High Country News* on August 22 asserted that immigration "will mean a China-like one

billion Americans later this century."

### Current Proposals

Many of the proposals to reduce immigration simply call for more cops, guns, helicopters jails and bigger walls in order to keep undocumented immigrants out. These policies have resulted in more deaths in the desert and wealthier smugglers, but they have had very little effect on immigration rates. The United States has dramatically increased the number of border agents and arrests in the last 10 years to no effect. The Center for Immigration Research at Houston showed a strong statistical link between enforcement and Mexican deaths at the border. Karl Eschbach, one of the authors of that report, said "The battle for the border is largely symbolic. No matter how much control you have, it

doesn't appear to stop the flow of immigrants. It only controls how much it costs them, where they do it and how they die."

Some liberals, such as Ted Kennedy, emphasize the positive contributions which immigrants are making to this country and propose amnesty and a path towards citizenship for long-term residents. Some Republicans support variations on George Bush's guest worker proposal to legalize the labor of immigrants, but tie their work permits closely to one employer. While amnesty and guest worker programs might relieve some of the human tragedies, a serious immigration policy must address the question – Why do so many Mexicans and

Central Americans take such enormous risks to come here?

### Immigration or Displacement?

In his book *One World, Ready or Not*, William Greider described some of the reasons for the current high rate of Mexican immigration. He calls Mexico "the most vivid - and tragic-example ...of how supposedly learned people can be swept up in the enthusiasms of financial investors." In the 90's Mexico was led by technocrats educated at Harvard and Yale who shared the vision of progress with U.S. elites when both countries signed the Free Trade Agreement in 1993. "Two years later Mexico was in ruin, its economy contracting by a devastating 7 percent, its domestic commerce frozen by a banking crisis that was devouring both financial institutions and industrial firms. At least one million jobs were destroyed, probably many more. Wage incomes fell by nearly one third. ... Instead of prospering ordinary Mexicans formed a swollen new wave of immigrants, heading north."

Too much emphasis is given to the act of immigration as being that of an individual choice rather than the result of historical, social, economic and political circumstances. The U.S experienced great waves of immigration from Mexico during the 1920s when Mexico was still in chaos from The Mexican Revolution and the U.S. was greatly in need of workers to support our agricultural boom. During World War II we welcomed guest

Please see Immigration on Page 12

# Immigration: A progressive policy would protect people

Continued from Page 11

workers under the "bracero" program. There are Mexicans working construction in Durango with college degrees who never planned or wanted to leave Mexico. There are indigenous people from Chiapas and Oaxaca who wept to leave their families and homes. Many of these people feel they were forced out of their homes -- displaced.

## Stable Communities

Many Mexicans and Central American immigrants in the Four Corners did not want to leave their homes, and they hope to return as soon as possible. The increased pressure by immigration agents in this area has had the reverse effect of its intention. Because of the cost and risk of crossing the border, immigrants now feel obliged to stay here instead of returning home to visit their families and communities during the winter. Many say they hope to stay 4 years and return home when they have saved enough money. This suggests that a long-term progressive policy would be one that supports stable communities in Mexico.

I have worked with Fort Lewis students and rural Mexicans in Mexico for the past 15 years and the causes of immigration are evident. Not only have Mexicans lost jobs because of the Free Trade Agreement, but farmers have been devastated by lower prices for corn and beans due to cheap imports from the U.S. A new amendment to the Mexican constitution has also wiped out the security of the common lands in the ejido system.

In order to pay off its foreign debt, Mexico has been forced to slash its subsidies for basic foods

and to cut funding for education. Many elementary and secondary schools in rural Mexico have closed because the government is no longer willing to subsidize small schools. Foreign investment is concentrated in the large cities and on the border. This also pulls Mexicans out of their small towns and villages. When their communities disappear, Mexicans often become permanent immigrants. There is no home to return to for weddings or funerals or vacations. It is estimated that the Free Trade Agreement has caused more than 12 million rural Mexicans to permanently leave their homes.

Environmentalists should analyze federal, state and local policies with some of the same criteria we use for NEPA. We should carefully analyze each government action to determine its effect on stable communities both in Mexico and Central America and the United States. In his book, *The Cultures, of Habitat*, Gary Nabham shows that stable communities tend to be ecological communities. People who stay in one place make a deal with the rest of nature.

They learn how to live within its limits. This applies to migration within the United States as well. Many of our policies are supposedly aimed at helping individuals or masses of people, but they ignore their impacts on places -- on communities. Trade agreements should contain minimum wage and environmental provisions for all countries participating. Investment should be directed to areas where people can live safely and ecologically -- not to the vio-

lent, contaminated cities of the border. In Mexico and South America, many of the poor, indigenous and middle class have turned against unregulated globalization and are electing leaders who will help them stay home. The United States should support democracy even if these new leaders have opposed our proposals. We have not done that.

Our current drug policies have greatly destabilized many Mexican communities, especially in northern Mexico. People do not feel safe because of the violence of the drug trade. If we seriously support the stabilization of communities in Mexico, we can greatly reduce the displacement and immigration to this country. Mexicans that I know are very fond of families and communities. They are very attached to certain landscapes -- mountains, streams, deserts and valleys. If given the choice, most of them will stay home.

And what about amnesty and guest worker programs? What about the immigrants who are already here? It is in everyone's interest that their status and labor be legalized so that they can live in stable communities. It is very destabilizing to have large numbers of invisible residents -- people who are ignored.

Serious policies that try to stabilize existing communities will be far more effective at reducing immigration than cops, guns, helicopters, jails, and death in the desert.

*Jim Fitzgerald helped found San Juan Citizens Alliance in 1986, and is recently retired as professor of sociology at Fort Lewis College.*

# Hermosa Roadless Area is prime potential wilderness

By Amber Clark

The Wild San Juans Plan, originally created by volunteer activists in the late 1990s, remains the citizens' vision for managing the San Juan National Forest, and functions as the backbone of our advocacy work on the San Juan. The vision set forth in the plan includes an interconnected landscape of vast, pristine, wild areas, to accommodate wide-ranging native species, and inhabited by human communities and economies appropriate to the place.

Protecting several pristine roadless areas as wilderness is a central aspect of the Wild San Juans Plan. The Forest Service is required to analyze the wilderness suitability of roadless lands as part of its resource management plan revision. Our proposal, based on extensive roadless inventory, includes:

- the San Miguel Roadless Area
- the Treasure Mountain Roadless Area
- the HD Mountains Roadless Area,
- additions to the Weminuche Wilderness such as the Turkey Creek area,
- additions to the South San Juan Wilderness,
- the Hermosa Roadless Area.

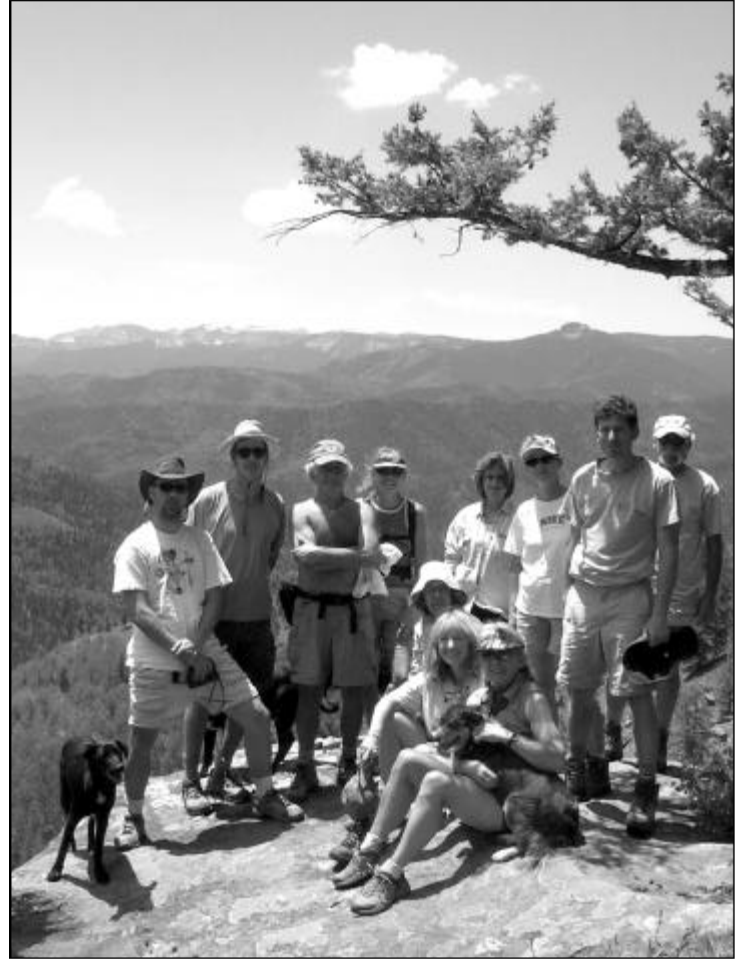
The Hermosa roadless area encompasses one of Colorado's largest and most biologically diverse forests, including at least 17 separate ecosystems, ranging from rocky scrub oak and pinyon-juniper at lower elevations to aspen, spruce, and fir at higher elevations. The crest of the La Plata Mountains defines Hermosa's western boundary, along which

runs a 20-mile segment of the Colorado Trail between Kennebec Pass and Hotel Draw. Hermosa's colorful landscape owes its beauty to thick sedimentary formations, including the crimson red shales and sandstones laid down as marine deposits during the Permian period some 250 million years ago. The area's wild core hosts significant wildlife populations and provides quality habitat for elk calving and summer range. Several major migration routes cross the roadless area.

The endangered peregrine falcon inhabits the area and Hermosa provides habitat for the Mexican spotted owl as well. The Colorado River cutthroat trout occurs in Hermosa Creek and its tributary streams.

The Hermosa roadless area includes a western spur that descends along Bear Creek to the Dolores River. Travelers can thus traverse from the Animas River to the Dolores River, over the crest of the La Platas, without crossing a road or otherwise encountering signs of civilization.

In order to remove the portions of the roadless area most modified by past human activity, and to accommodate mechanized recre-



Amber Clark

Hikers explored the far reaches of the potential Hermosa wilderness area on a summer hike led by SJCA roadless inventory coordinator, Harry Riegle.

ational activities – such as mountain biking - that are incompatible with wilderness designation, the Citizen's Management Alternative proposes wilderness designation for over 113,000 acres of Hermosa in two distinct units separated by the Hermosa Trail. The Hermosa Trail is left out of the wilderness boundary to accommodate existing mountain bicycling use and forms a non-wilderness corridor separating the two units. Our proposal does not envision motorized recreation in the area, including on the Hermosa trail.

Hermosa Creek also qualifies for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Such designation would knit together the two sides of the wilderness area.

## Calendar of upcoming events

**October 1-2** Second Annual Oktoberfest sponsored by San Juan Citizens Alliance. Downtown Durango. All day Saturday and Sunday.

**October 9** Recognition and celebration of SJCA donors, Cypress Café. Call Carol Clark for details.

**October 15** Hike in Cross Canyon Wilderness Study Area, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Contact Amber Clark to sign up.

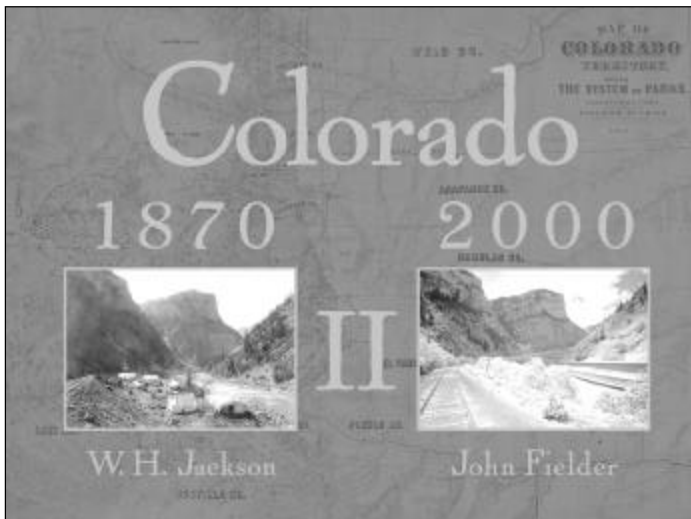
**October 28-29** People's Oil and Gas Summit, Farmington. Visit [www.ogap.org](http://www.ogap.org) for more info.

**November 4** Mountain Film on tour, to benefit SJCA's Wild San Juans Campaign. Abbey Theatre, Durango. 7 pm. Admission \$10.

**November 10** John Fielder program featuring his revised pictorial retrospective, 1870-2000. Durango Arts Center. 5:30 - 10:00 pm. Admission \$12.

**December 8** SJCA Holiday Party, 850 Main Ave., Durango. Starts 5:30 pm.

### John Fielder Slideshow Colorado Then and Now: Part II



John Fielder will present a slideshow based on his new book: Part II of the Colorado Then and Now series. Wildly popular the first time around, Fielder has all new photo pairs of W.H. Jackson's historic shots coupled with his contemporary images of the same location. See how our state has changed in the past 100 years.

November 10  
5:30 -10 p.m.  
Durango Arts Center  
\$12 Admission

## 2005 People's Oil & Gas Summit

Join us in Farmington, N.M. on Oct. 28-29 and meet speakers from across the United States and Canada. Learn about toxics associated with oil and gas development and how to protect yourself and your community.

### Presentations and discussions will include:

- The Big Picture of Oil and Gas Toxics Wastes Associated with Exploration and Production – air, water and soil contaminants
- Introduction to Environmental Toxicology – how are we exposed to toxics and what can we do about it?
- Toxics Associated with Offshore Oil and Gas, and Pipelines
- Safety and Noise Impacts

### Featured speakers:

- Dr. Theo Colborn is a world renowned scientist and co-author of *Our Stolen Future* – a scientific detective story about toxic threats to our fertility, intelligence and survival.
- Dr. Kaye H. Kilburn is an M.D. and Professor of Medicine at the University of Southern California. He is a leading researcher on brain impairment from chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide and diesel exhaust.
- Andrew Nikiforuk is a journalist and award-winning author of *Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil*.
- Dr. Gina Solomon, M.D., M.P.H. is a specialist in environmental medicine and a senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

### On-site tours:

Tours of oil and gas development in New Mexico's San Juan Basin will be conducted on Oct. 27.

**October 28-29**  
**Courtyard Marriott Hotel**  
**Farmington, N.M.**  
**8a.m.-5 p.m. on both Friday and Saturday**  
**Register online at [www.ogap.org](http://www.ogap.org).**

## Attention Brainstorm and Frontier Internet customers

Introducing a simple way to benefit San Juan Citizens Alliance at no cost to you!

Non-profits like San Juan Citizens Alliance can sign up 20 current Brainstorm or Frontier customers, at which point Brainstorm will take 20% of those customers' bills and give it to the nonprofit that you signed up with. Enrolling in this program does not effect your Internet bill or service in any way.

Please let us know if you are interested so we can start receiving Brainstorm's support. Contact Carol Clark at (970) 259-3583 or [carolclark@frontier.net](mailto:carolclark@frontier.net).



Steve Bodine

About 40 members and staff enjoyed great weather and good food at our annual meeting and BBQ in August.

## McNall: SJCA welcomes New Mexico board member Sug McNall

Continued from Page 3

effort so far, was the three year battle in the early 1980's with the City of Aztec to convince them to clean up the Old Abandoned Aztec City Dump which covered over 100 acres of BLM and private land near our home and neighborhood," Sug recalls. "My only helper was a newspaper reporter, Margaret, who published articles and photos in the *Farmington Daily Times* to help the cause. The two of us finally succeeded in forcing the clean up!!"

Sug and Warren, her current husband, now live in Aztec. Warren worked for and retired from the New Mexico State Game and Fish Department. He also served on the State Water Quality Control Commission for 14 years. Like Sug, Warren is involved with many of our local environmental and social

issues.

Sug has been particularly vocal on power plant issues. She is an active member of the Four Corners Ozone Task Force. "I remember the Basin air quality before the first power plant went on line and the ongoing deterioration of the environment is very upsetting to me," Sug says.

Sug is also an animal rights activist and was a key person in eliminating cruelty and mismanagement at the Aztec Animal Shelter in 2000 - 2001.

Sug sums up her philosophy thusly: "Since environmental and social injustice knows no boundaries, what happens in New Mexico affects Colorado and vice versa. I care and I am a get-down-in-the-trenches-Grandma who works diligently to make a difference."

# Join San Juan Citizens Alliance today

Put my tax-deductible gift to work for the land, wildlife and people of the San Juan Basin!

- \$1,000                       \$100                       \$30
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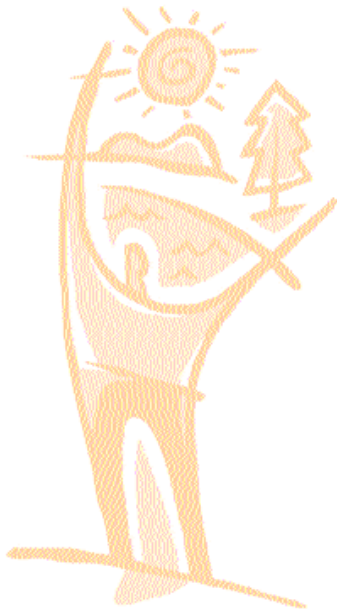
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