

GreenFireReport

Winter/Spring 2008

20
Years

A publication of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, a non-profit, public interest law firm dedicated to protecting New Mexico's environment and communities. nmenvirolaw.org

The Battle for the Galisteo Basin

Heating Up near Santa Fe

by Nancy Seewald, Resident of Galisteo

Residents from all across the Galisteo Basin are joining forces to protect the fragile watershed from the onslaught of oil and gas exploration and development. This battle could change New Mexico. Tecton Energy LLC from Houston has leased minerals from the Rio Puerco across the Atrisco lands just west of Albuquerque, and they have leased BLM minerals along the Sandoval County line. Hundreds of miles of land could be threatened. But the battle lines are being drawn down on the Galisteo Creek, south of Santa Fe.

Tecton has applied for three permits from the Oil Conservation Commission (OCC). The permits are in egregious locations and would violate several provisions of present and proposed Santa Fe County ordinances. The construction of roads and bulldozing of large drilling pads along with the heavy truck traffic involved with all exploratory drilling would negatively impact migratory routes, the vast archeological sites, and of course the riparian areas north and south of the

creek. Two locations are in or near the floodplain, and one is on the edge of the fragile alluvial aquifer. Homes and water wells are also nearby.

After months of public pressure, Governor Richardson returned from the presidential campaign trail and called for a moratorium. In



Oil well waste pit. Image: Courtesy of Nancy Seewald

mid-January he issued an official executive order and stopped the permitting process for six months. The studies that have been demanded by thousands of residents are now underway. The New Mexico Oil and Gas Association worked hard to prevent the OCC from enacting strict environmental protective rules covering oil waste disposal.



"We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes."

—Aldo Leopold *A Sand County Almanac*

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On February 26, 2008 the Santa Fe County Commission placed a one year moratorium on oil and gas drilling in the Galisteo Basin in order to give county staff more time to study environmental, geographical and archaeological issues in the Basin before completing the new draft ordinance.

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This issue marks the second of four *Green Fire Reports* that will celebrate the Law Center's twentieth anniversary over the next year. As part of that celebration, we are happy to share *Twenty Years | Twenty Stories*, which will focus on the clients, volunteers, staff members, donors, and victories that have seen the Law Center from its earliest days to the present.

Win a Chance to Shoot a Sheep!

Law Center attorneys are accustomed to challenging, complex cases. But it is not very often that they deal with the truly bizarre...like the Red Mutton Hunt case.

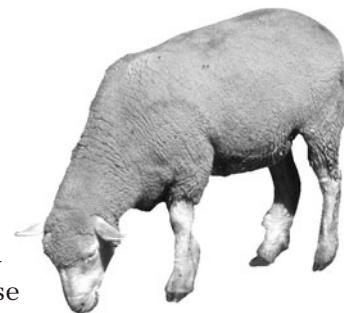
In 1988, Doug Meiklejohn was contacted about a macabre money-making scheme proposed by a leaseholder in the Lincoln National Forest. The leaseholder proposed to paint targets on sheep, turn them loose on his allotment, and then raffle off chances to "hunt" the animals.

The Law Center has not frequently argued on behalf of grazing animals on public lands. However, when the Forest Service announced the public comment period, Doug joined with animal protection advocates and environmentalists to come to the rescue of the beleaguered livestock.

"After we absorbed the fact that there were actually people in the world who would pay to shoot a painted sheep, we went to work figuring out legal strategies," remembers Doug. "We successfully argued that hunting sheep in a

federal forest was a very inappropriate use of public lands," he says.

"We also argued that the raffle was illegal because gambling in New Mexico was against the law at the time." The Forest Service agreed with the Law Center and its allies, and nixed the Red Mutton Hunt scheme. ✕



First Donor

The Law Center has grown into one of New Mexico's most respected environmental organizations, with hundreds of supportive members, dozens of cases under its belt, and a crack legal team. And it all started with a \$25 check.

That check came from our first donor, Lynda Taylor. Lynda is a nationally-recognized activist and policy advocate who worked at the Southwest Research and Information Center at the time.

"I didn't have much money to give, but I was so happy that Doug Meiklejohn was getting attorneys together. Working with vulnerable communities that were in the down-and-dirty fights with polluters and regulators, I realized that they needed lawyers dedicated



Lynda with her family, Robert, Aidan and Alejandra.

Image: Courtesy of Lynda Taylor

for fighting on their behalf. That check was my way of

showing my commitment to the Law Center's cause."

One of those communities was Sunland Park, where residents enlisted Lynda and the Law Center in their fight against a medical waste incinerator and a landfill (please see Fall 2007 issue of the *Green Fire Report* for more information on this case). "The incinerator company never in a million years thought we could shut it down. But we had the right mix of people at the right time. We stopped it dead in its tracks," she remembers. It was just one occasion when she saw her early investment in a tiny non-profit law office pay off.

Since that time, she has been an invaluable supporter of the Law Center. Before the Law Center could afford to hire a Development Director, Lynda helped the staff to identify foundations that would be likely to fund its work. Later she joined the Law Center's Development Committee to help increase individual gifts to the organization. Lynda, her husband Robert Haspel, and their children hosted our annual event in 2000, and played host again for our 20th Anniversary Kick Off Event in Santa Fe. The Law Center awarded Lynda with the Community Environmental Advocacy Award in 1999.

The Law Center thanks Lynda and her family for their tremendous support of our work over the past twenty years! ✕



1987

Law Center opens in September



1988

Receives first grant - \$7,000 from the Harder Foundation to work on solid waste issues



1989

Participates in hearings in Las Cruces to prevent additional grazing in a Wilderness Study Area

Law Center's Oldest Case

Still Flying High

Long-running cases seem to be a hallmark of the Law Center, with several complex cases having spanned more than a decade and several more creeping up on their tenth anniversaries. But only one has the distinction of being our longest-running case. Is it A, B or C:

- A) *Our work to prevent the expansion of the Southwest Landfill in the South Valley of Albuquerque.*
- B) *Our representation of Taos Pueblo in its efforts to prevent the expansion of the Taos municipal airport.*
- C) *Our fight against Hydro Resources, Inc. in its bid to open uranium mines in and near the Navajo communities of Church Rock and Crownpoint?*

The answer is B. Although it is not our most highly-publicized case, Doug Meiklejohn's thirteen years as counsel to Taos Pueblo marks it as the Law Center's oldest case.

Gil Suazo, who is a former governor of Taos Pueblo, has worked on the issue for ten years. "Even without the expansion, overflights impact the Pueblo," Gov. Suazo explains. He continues that increased airplane traffic would threaten the Pueblo's culture with increased noise pollution and visual disturbances, and possibly cause damage to the tribe's 600-year-old landmark adobe structures.

The current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) process has taken more than fifteen years and is not yet finished. It has been a frustrating process for Pueblo members, who not only have to contend with a drawn-out administrative process, but also with cultural roadblocks. "We have to try to get people to understand the concerns of how the airplanes impact the Pueblo," he says. "Many don't understand our way of life and what we're talking about." The FAA has generally ignored extensive comments provided by the Pueblo,

even when those comments have been prepared with the help of an FAA-funded airport expert.

A good illustration of this, remarks Meiklejohn, was a noise analysis performed by the FAA several years ago. "The FAA measured the noise of an airplane and argued that it should not be problematic for the Pueblo because it was no louder than a thunderclap. How is someone from a traditional society supposed to respond to an agency that compares a twin-engine Cessna to an act of nature?"

Still, Suazo says that the Pueblo is thankful for the work of the Law Center, and Doug's role in deciphering legal issues and in responding to the FAA. "The agency is taking us more seriously now - we're starting to talk with higher-level officials. But our success remains to be seen. We always remember that the FAA is in the airport building business, and our job is to protect our way of life." ✂

Twentieth Anniversary Kick Off / October 25, 2007 at the home of Lynda Taylor and Robert Haspel



Richard Deertrack,
outgoing President of
the Law Center



Director of Development
Sebia Hawkins and
Photographer Tony Bonanno



Publisher Cliff Feigenbaum,
Law Center Director of Finance
Yana Merrill, and Dentist
Leslie Lakind



1990

Awarded Santa Fe
Community Foundation's
first Jack Kenney Environmental
Award



1991

Represents citizens in hearings
to halt a permit for Dog
Canyon landfill near Alamogordo;
landfill closed in 1994



1992

Key to adoption of more
stringent regulations
to prevent oil and gas
contamination of soil and groundwater

SouthWest Organizing Project

“**T**ogether, we’ve taken on the fights that no one else would take on,” explains Robby Rodriguez, Director of the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP), one of the country’s leading advocates for social justice and a long-time Law Center ally and client.

“No one else that I know of would have taken on Intel, one of the biggest corporations in the world, and a darling of New Mexico’s state government.

“But SWOP, the Law Center and Corrales Residents for Clean Air and Water were too concerned about the health of local residents and the protection of our water resources to shy away from that David-and-Goliath fight.”

Rodriguez is referring to the Law Center’s representation of



The late Jeanne Guana and Doug Wolf picketing Intel

water rights from farmers near Socorro. The ruling stymied the company’s attempt to use the rights to offset 4 million gallons of groundwater used at the Rio Rancho plant every day.

Unfortunately, SWOP and the Law Center were not so successful

Without attorneys it would be tremendously difficult – and sometimes impossible – to go into court or hearings and make sure that the voices of affected residents are heard. Without the Law Center’s excellent legal services, we would not be as effective as we are.

The Law Center first started working with SWOP in 1990 on the Sunland Park incinerator case, and since that time has worked closely with the organizing group. In addition to Intel, Law Center attorneys have

represented SWOP efforts to prevent the expansion of the Southwest Landfill and the extension of Universe Boulevard in Albuquerque, to negotiate for environmental improvements by the Stericycle

“Without the Law Center’s excellent legal services we would not be as effective as we are.”



SWOP in two proceedings against the multinational computer chip manufacturer. One involved the company’s attempt to purchase water rights from southern New Mexico while the other was a long-standing fight to force the plant to clean up its toxic air emissions. In the former case, Law Center Staff Attorney Doug Wolf represented SWOP in a victorious effort to

prevent the company from purchasing \$1.5 million in

in forcing the company to clean up its air emissions. But Rodriguez, who cut his teeth as a college intern working for SWOP at the Intel hearings, maintains that taking on the fight was important in its own right. “It’s important to win these battles because human health and the health of the environment are at stake. But it’s also about giving communities the power to go into

these battles against the government and giant companies.

medical waste treatment facility in the city’s Wells Park neighborhood, and in the successful effort to add language to the State’s Solid Waste Management Regulations that provide significant protections for low-income communities faced with proposed landfills. ❌



1993

Publishes *Living Within Our Means: A Water Management Policy for New Mexico in the 21st Century*



1994

Files Clean Water Act lawsuit in LAC Minerals gold mine case; the case is settled in 1996



1995

Helps defend clients from “Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation” in Sunland Park landfill case

Law Center 'Living Treasure'

Still an Environmental Champion

While the Law Center has had many tremendously talented and passionate individuals serve on its Board, it has had only one *bona fide* "Living Treasure" serve at its helm: Edith (Edie) Pierpont. Edie was named a "Treasure" by the Network for the Common Good in 1991 because of her tireless work for New Mexico's environment, including a stint as the Law Center's first Board President.

For nearly two decades, Edie was a force to be reckoned with at the State Legislature, where she was a close ally of the Law Center, lobbying on behalf of the New Mexico League of Women Voters on land use, water, hazardous waste and nuclear waste issues.

She smiles when remembering the "many, many hearings" that she sat through with Doug Meiklejohn over the years, having worked closely with him on many legislative initiatives, including the successful efforts to gain passage of the landmark Solid Waste Act of 1990 and the New Mexico Mining Act of 1993.

"The Law Center was a much needed force that could take on cases against environmental threats," she remembers when asked why she supported the Law Center in its early days. "Doug and his staff gave real teeth to the environmentalists working to protect our land and water."

While she has retired from much of her volunteer work, Edie is still as passionate about saving the earth. With a view out her kitchen window of the Galisteo Basin (see page 1), she cites water protection, land use and global warming as the issues that should be foremost in the minds of today's environmentalists.


The Law Center thanks Edie for her two decades of support and guidance. 



Image: Courtesy of Edith Pierpont

Law Center 'Living Treasure' Still an Environmental Champion

For more information on all of the cases shown on this map and described on pages 6-7, along with casework that we just couldn't fit in the newsletter, please see the html version of the Winter 2007 Green Fire Report, available at nmenvirolaw.org/news.



1996

Convinces the NMED to allow expert testimony on environmental justice issues for the first time.



1997

Successfully represents clients in protest of Intel's request of 2,000 acre-feet of water from Socorro County to Rio Rancho



1998

Director Douglas Meiklejohn receives the Public Lawyer Award from the New Mexico Bar Association

Law Center
Docket 2006- 2007
*cases closed in 2007

Citizens Take on ConAgra Ethanol Plant

by Bruce Frederick

The Law Center won in its appeal on behalf of Clovis' Hispanic, African-American and low-income residents against the proposed 110 million gallon per year ethanol plant that would be sited near their residential neighborhoods. In 2007, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) issued an air permit for the plant even though residents were very concerned about the possible respiratory illnesses that might be caused by the plant's air emissions and the diesel exhaust from thousands of delivery trucks and trains annually, as well as other adverse impacts like noise, odor, traffic, and dust.

Representing our clients in an appeal to the Environmental Improvement Board, we argued that the company's notice to the community about the location of the plant had been substantially flawed. Based on our arguments, the Environmental Improvement Board reversed the NMED's decision to issue the permit and required NMED to conduct another public hearing following proper notice. The Law Center was prepared to refute NMED's assertion that it must make permitting decisions based solely on technical air emission data; rather, we intended to argue that the agency must seriously consider all of the

adverse disparate impacts that the plant will have on Clovis' minority populations, not just air emissions.

In the face of this additional hearing, which could be followed by additional appeals, ConAgra decided on January 22, 2008 to withdraw its permit application for the ethanol plant. This is a big win for Clovis residents. Nevertheless, the Law Center may still seek to challenge ConAgra's existing air permit for its grain elevator, which was also obtained following a misleading notice and which inflicts excessive levels of noise, odor, and dust on nearby residents. ✕

Acoma Pueblo Water Office

Joins Uranium Fight

by Eric Jantz

Acoma Pueblo has been through one uranium boom, and its members are still grappling with the damage done to cultural sites and the environment from more than twenty years ago. With energy

degradation from uranium mining, and its opposition of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement proposed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for future *in situ* leach uranium mining in the West.

states Jantz, "is to ensure that Acoma Pueblo is treated as a sovereign nation in this matter, and that its concerns are taken seriously by state and federal regulators."

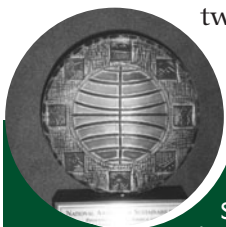
For information on the Generic Environmental Impact Statement, please see our website, nmenvirolaw.org/news.

companies once again eyeing the uranium-rich lands of northwestern New Mexico, the Pueblo is preparing to defend the health of its people, land and water against future mining.

In August 2007, the Law Center agreed to represent the Haaku Water Office of Acoma Pueblo in two efforts: its work to prevent future

In response to increased interest in mining on Mount Taylor, a significant cultural site for Acoma Pueblo and other tribes, Staff Attorney Eric Jantz is representing the Pueblo in a government-to-government consultation with representatives of state agencies and the U.S. Forest Service. "Our current goal,"

In February 2008, Acoma Pueblo, along with Zuni Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe obtained emergency listing for Mt. Taylor on the State Register of Cultural Properties which will provide the mountain with some protection for a year. ✕



1999

National Award for Sustainability from Renew America and the President's Council on Sustainable Development



2000

Helps to defeat attempt by industry to limit public participation in setting state water quality standards



2001

Molybdenum mine posts a \$152 million environmental reclamation bond – highest in the nation at the time.

Oil Pit Rule the Pits for Industry

by Eric Jantz

After consideration of Task Force recommendations, the NM Oil Conservation Division has issued draft regulations on oil and gas waste pits, which are pits dug into the ground that collect solid and liquid wastes produced during oil and gas drilling. The draft regulations significantly strengthen public safety and environmental requirements of these waste pits by requiring oil and gas companies to have liners for all pits. Currently, not all pits are required to have liners – oil and gas companies can essentially just dump their toxic wastes into a hole in the ground and then cover it up. In addition, the regulations would require companies to take their wastes to a certified landfill, and encourage the use of “closed loop” drilling systems, which effectively re-use many of the materials that would otherwise wind up in waste pits.

A hearing was held on the proposed regulations, and the Law Center presented extensive health and economic testimony on behalf of its client, the Oil & Gas Accountability Project (OGAP). An internationally-known environmental health expert, Dr. Theo Colborn, testified about the kinds of chemicals that end up in these pits. Dr. Colborn pointed out that most of the chemicals in pits are highly dangerous, including chemicals that cause cancer, liver damage, and neurological damage. Dr. Colborn also testified about the potential for oil and gas pit chemicals to be endocrine disruptors, which interfere with hormones and can lead to developmental problems both within a person’s lifetime and generations later.

The Law Center also presented testimony from Mary Ellen Denomy, a Certified Petroleum Accountant who

testified about the possible economic impacts on oil and gas companies. Ms. Denomy concluded, based on her experience representing oil and gas operators and county governments in Colorado and New Mexico, that the proposed regulations would, at worst, increase oil and gas waste disposal costs by about 6%. Using closed loop systems would actually save operators money.

Even testimony by the oil and gas industry confirmed that at most, the new rule would impose a 10% increase in waste disposal costs and at most a 5% decrease in returns on investment. This is a small imposition on an industry that is making record profits and is responsible for substantial contamination to groundwater and soil. ✕

Southwest Landfill Zoning Effort Unsuccessful

by Douglas Meiklejohn

We regret to report that the Law Center’s effort to prevent the issuance of a zoning permit for the proposed expansion of the Southwest landfill has ended unsuccessfully.

After the Bernalillo County Commission decided to allow the Southwest landfill to amend its zoning permit to allow expansion of the landfill from 80 to 120 acres in 2003, we and our clients obtained a ruling from the Second Judicial District Court reversing that decision. Unfortunately, the Court of Appeals overturned the ruling of the District Court, and the matter was then

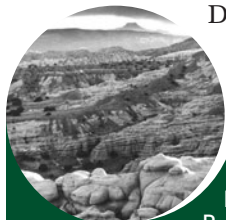
remanded to the Bernalillo County Commission for reconsideration of its decision on one point. Regrettably, the Commission ruled in favor of the landfill again, and the landfill therefore now has the Commission’s permission to expand.

Fortunately, we and our clients still have avenues to pursue. The environmental justice complaint that we filed against the State Environment Department for issuing a permit to the landfill in 1999 is still pending, and it is the position of the State Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau that the landfill’s Solid Waste



Fortunately, we and our clients still have avenues to pursue.

Act permit only allows the landfill to use 80 acres. We and our clients therefore will continue to work on these remaining avenues to prevent the environmental injustice that would result from expansion of the landfill. ✕



2002

Co-Presents the 1st annual Mother Earth, Father Sky: Perspectives on Environment in the West lecture series



2003

Defeats Phelps Dodge’s legislative attempts to exempt its mines from reclamation requirements



2004

Successfully advocates for a health-based NM uranium groundwater standard

The Coalition for Energy Accountability

Operating Principles Statement

New Mexico's Rio Grande Rift is an international treasure deserving of the highest protection. Home to several Pueblo Nations, Santa Fe, the Galisteo Basin, the Ortiz and San Pedro Mountains, the area is one of the state's most ecologically and culturally diverse regions. It is a vital resource to farmers, ranchers, students and educators, businesspeople, artists, spiritual and religious leaders, sportsmen, outdoor enthusiasts, and community and conservation groups. In accord with inherent beauty, ecological value, and authority of Santa Fe County, we believe the following:

1. The watersheds of the Galisteo Basin are of paramount value and its waters the lifeblood of the land's wildlife and our healthy communities;
2. The Galisteo Basin is a vital resource to a sustainable future for central New Mexico's cultural, rural and agricultural communities;
3. The Galisteo Basin provides unique recreational and sporting opportunities for families, hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts;

4. The Galisteo Basin provides a home for abundant wildlife populations, and holds intrinsic ecological importance and scenic beauty;
5. The Galisteo Basin should be protected for the benefit of the people – all of the people.

Based on these values, we believe that it is a grave mistake to exploit these special lands for the principal benefit of the fossil fuel industry. Oil and gas development poses fundamental threats to the water, wildlife and cultural values of the Galisteo Basin as well as to the public health of communities throughout the region. Therefore all steps must be taken to prevent and reduce the impact caused by energy development. The region should be protected for the benefit of present and future generations. ❌

The Coalition for Energy Accountability is an alliance of businesses, non-profits and individuals fighting to protect the Galisteo Basin from oil and gas production. The Law Center represents Drilling Santa Fe, a member of the coalition.

*The Coalition for Energy Accountability | P.O. Box 23150
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502 | <http://drillingsantafe.blogspot.com>*



2005

Helps obtain NM Supreme Court ruling: community concerns must be considered during NMED landfill proceedings



2006

Forces Los Alamos Lab to cancel 2 permits to openly burn explosives, depleted uranium and other chemicals



2007

Successfully lobbies for the most stringent law in the nation to protect landowners from oil and gas degradation

The Coalition for Energy Accountability*

Non-Profit Organizations:

Amigos Bravos
Arroyo Hondo Land Trust
Cimarron Sky-Dog Reserve
Commonweal Conservancy
Concerned Citizens of Cerrillos
Drilling Santa Fe (DSF)
Earth Works Institute
Environment New Mexico
Ecoversity
Galisteo Community Association
Madrid Cultural Projects
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
National Wildlife Federation
New Energy Economy
New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC)
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Oil & Gas Accountability Project/
EARTHWORKS (OGAP)
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Recursos de Santa Fe
Renewable Energy Partners of New Mexico
The San Marcos Association
Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT)
Southwest Seminars
WildEarth Guardians
The Wilderness Society
Wild Prairie Partners

Businesses:

Althouse, Inc.
BJ Briggs, LLC
Confluence Mediation & Counseling
Coulter-Brooks Art & Antiques
High Feather Ranch Bed and Breakfast
Janine Lehmann Design
The Janis Group, Inc.
Lone Mountain Ranch
New Mexico Biotech, Inc.
OpenMake Software
Rush Creek Editions
Saltamontes on Grasshopper Hill Retreat
Santa Fe Permaculture
Thal Equine, LLC & Thal Boarding Training, LLC

Citizens' Activists Groups (not 501(c))

Santa Fe Not Oil

Individuals:

Tweeti Blancett, plus many others.

* Listing as of date of publication, March 2008

< Galisteo Basin Story from page I

Counties can zone polluting industries out of watersheds and away from rural residential areas. Now that the easy money has been made in oil and gas development in New Mexico, it is imperative that citizens work to strengthen County and State protections to prevent the devastation from this final run at the most marginal areas for oil and gas exploitation.

It is time to make tough decisions about protection of air and water and find new ways to fund the public schools as the old wealth of the Permian Basin is rapidly diminishing. In another twenty years, the San Juan Basin will also be depleted. If there are fortunes to be made by out of state oil and gas companies plundering the Galisteo watershed or other areas along the vast Albuquerque Rift, then that recovery must be done with the strictest of protections.

The one old well down in the Galisteo creekbed that has produced sporadically over the last 23 years is a dismal failure. In spite of months of efforts with the supposed “new

technologies,” and thousands of barrels of Santa Fe County drinking water and thousands of gallons of Schlumberger frac’ing chemicals forced into that tight formation, only a few dozen barrels of oil have been produced. Unfortunately Black-Ferrill #1 is a sad testament to how speculative and wasteful these last marginal plays can be. In late January, Tecton officially filed for temporary abandonment of the well.

There was natural gas found back in the 1980’s. However, a marginally productive gas field with a maze of collection lines and pipelines with all of the noxious pollution and fire danger that accompanies natural gas development would be a death blow to the wildlife, the water, the air, and the vibrant and unique communities of the Galisteo Basin.

Citizens must demand the strictest of environmental protections as industry fights back against every County or State initiative to protect the health of residents, wildlife, and our dwindling water resources.

At a public meeting held by Tecton Energy on October 4, the company’s CEO stated that his company believes there are between 50 and 100 million barrels of light sweet crude oil and 5 to 10 trillion cubic feet of natural gas along the Albuquerque Rift between the San Juan Basin and Socorro. The Houston-based company currently plans to drill eight exploratory wells, perhaps more, on the 65,000 acres between the villages of Galisteo and Cerrillos, where it has leased minerals. ⚡



For Galisteo Drilling Donations: The Law Center can

*now accept tax-deductible
donations from individuals
for our work on behalf of
Drilling Santa Fe against the
proposed oil and gas drilling
in the Galisteo Basin.*

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GFR **www.nmenvirolaw.org**



STAFF: back row — Sebia, Doug, Bruce, Juana
Front row — Yana, Shelbie, Eric
(see full names in staff listing)

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Anniversary Contributors – celebrate twenty years of environmental victories with the Law Center! Become an Anniversary Contributor by increasing your next gift by 20%! Call the Law Center for details, or email nmelc@nmelc.org for a personalized Anniversary Contributor package!

Welcomes and Farewells

The Law Center is pleased to announce the addition of two new Board members. **Myron Armijo**, who joined the Board in October, is a former Governor of Santa Ana Pueblo who currently is the Tribal Liaison in the State Engineers Office. Myron brings very important experience to our board as a Pueblo leader, and as an ardent supporter of conservation of New Mexico's most precious natural resource – water. **Stuart Bluestone** also joined the Board in October, and served as New Mexico's Chief Deputy Attorney General from 1999-2007. He has served as Director of the Civil and Consumer Protection Divisions for previous Attorneys General and currently serves as Attorney General Gary King's Senior Counsel. Please join us in welcoming Myron and Stuart to our Board of Directors.

The youngest member to join the Law Center is **Meredith (Maggie) Clark** who was born in November to the Law Center's Development Officer Shelbie Knox and her husband David Clark. Welcome Maggie!

The Law Center bids farewell to four valuable members of its team. We wish them all the best of luck in their future endeavors.

The Law Center announces the departure of **Sarah Piltch**, who served as a Staff Attorney for two and a half years. Sarah was an important member of the legal team, achieving several important strategic

accomplishments for New Mexico communities. She served as lead counsel on the Vulcan concrete batch plant case in Bernalillo County, which marked the first appeal ever brought to the Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board. The appeal incited the board to change its regulations allowing for more community involvement in their decisions. She initially led our representation of clients in Clovis who prevented the siting of an ethanol plant next to African-American and Hispanic communities. Sarah was also an important part of the legal team on the Paseo del Norte extension case and, most recently, the Crownpoint-Church Rock uranium case.

We first met **Richard Deertrack** in 1994 when he represented Taos Pueblo in its fight to prevent the expansion



The youngest member to join the Law Center ranks: Meredith (Maggie) Clark

of the Taos airport. Shortly after he joined our Board of Directors in 1997, Richard explained, "Many Indian tribes...don't feel they can have an effect on environmental issues...because they don't understand the legal processes. This is where the Law Center – which has people who are dedicated and who know the process, who are experts and know the language – is so important to Indian tribes and other communities." During his tenure, including four years as the President of the Board, he contributed to our work through his deep grasp of the environmental issues facing Native American communities and his quiet, introspective leadership.

The Law Center would like to thank **Joe Clarke** for his service on our Board of Directors, including two years as co-Chair of our Development Committee. When he joined our Board in 2003, he brought to our table his significant knowledge as an attorney specializing in water issues and his passion to protect the environment of New Mexico.

And we would like to thank **Sue Chappell**, Board Treasurer from 2005 to October 2007, for her invaluable service to the Law Center over the past nine years. When Sue came to the Law Center in 1998, her experience as a community activist and practicing attorney with Sutin, Thayer & Browne added important insights to Board deliberations over Law Center cases. ✕



The Law Center is celebrating its twentieth anniversary! Join us for a year of events and special newsletter issues focusing on our past victories – and our future goals! This year, we will be going on the road, visiting towns across New Mexico and celebrating our many victories along the way. Please join us in Roswell, Silver City, Las Cruces, Gallup, and Taos.

Pull Out Your Party Wear

We want to meet you

by Sebia Hawkins

Dear Friends, We're twenty years old now and feel like celebrating our environmental victories with all of you! While our year-long anniversary celebration will culminate in a big affair in Fall of 2008 in Santa Fe, we are hosting a series of member gatherings around the state. Currently we are planning to hold anniversary events in:

Roswell, April 2008
Silver City, May 2008
Las Cruces, June 2008
Gallup, July 2008
Taos, August 2008
(Dates Subject to change)

So, please mark your monthly calendars, pull out your party wear, and we will keep you posted about specific event details. We want to meet you in person to hear why

you've been loyal to us. And, we really hope that we can thank you personally for your steady and essential support over the past twenty years. We wouldn't be here without you!

All the best,



Sebia Hawkins, Director of Development

Anniversary Contributors

A tremendous thanks to our members who have increased their last gift by 20% or more over their previous gift in honor of the Law Center's 20th Anniversary! As of the end of November this has generated \$85,000 in anniversary contributions.

Your support has helped protect communities across New Mexico for two decades - and for that we are forever grateful.

Our Kick Off Anniversary

Celebration on October 25th, 2007 (see photos pg. 3) at the home of long time supporters Lynda Taylor and Robert Haspel was fantastic. So many wonderful people from Santa Fe came to help us celebrate and launch the next twenty years of effort to ensure greater environmental justice for all New Mexicans. Please stay tuned for the Anniversary Event near you.

EMA Matching Grant Update

In our last newsletter we told you about the EMA Matching Grant for \$25,000. We have terrific news to report. Through incredible generosity you have contributed over \$68,000 since July of 2007 when we received the challenge grant offer. You helped us more than meet our match by the end of the calendar year, and we are so grateful for your support for our efforts.

United Way - Combined Federal Campaign

The Law Center is a new member of the United Way's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) in New Mexico as of spring 2007. If you, your organization, or workplace participates in the CFC for federal employees, you can support the Law Center through this charitable vehicle. It is easy to do. Go to www.cnnmcfc.org OR www.opm.gov/cfc. On the Home Page, page

10 and 11, you will find general information about the CFC and the service categories. On page 92 you will find the New Mexico Environmental Law Center entry # 83361. Please give us a call if you have any questions. ☒



Robby Rodriguez, ED of SWOP, at member event in Albuquerque, Feb. 21, 2008. Photo Credit: Ossy Werner



Call for Summer Housing: The Law Center will have two interns this summer who need a place to stay. They will be in Santa Fe from June 15 to September 15. If you can host one or both, please contact Shelbie at 505-989-9022, ext. 29 or shelbie@nmelc.org.

Thanks to our Green Business Partners!

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Contact *Sebia Hawkins*
at 505.989.9022 ext. 27

Anniversary Series

Mission

The New Mexico Environmental Law Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm that provides free and low-cost legal services on environmental matters throughout New Mexico. The mission of the Law Center is to protect New Mexico's environment and communities. Founded in 1987, the Law Center works with clients – often individuals, neighborhood associations, environmental organizations, Tribes and Pueblos – seeking to protect the environment. The work of the Law Center is made possible by tax-deductible contributions from individuals, businesses, foundations and limited earned income.

20
Years



New Mexico
Environmental Law Center

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