

GreenFireReport

Fall 2007

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

Celebrating 20 Years

by Douglas Meiklejohn

“Three former state officials have founded a Santa Fe-based law firm to protect the haunting landscapes, precious streams, and splendid wildlife that have made New Mexico the land of enchantment.” So began a back-page story in the first *Green Fire Report* that was plainly titled “Environmental Law Center Opens,” in December, 1987.

Even in its nascent stages, we recognized that the New Mexico Environmental Law Center had a big job ahead of it – no less than the protection of everything that makes New Mexico such a special and beautiful place. The Center's founding was spurred by a statewide election, after which my co-incorporators, Susan Tixier and Sharon Murray, and I felt that we had to protect our natural environment from an administration that was not living up to its responsibility to protect these special places.

Soon it became apparent that the government was not doing an adequate job to protect the people of New Mexico either, causing the Law Center to shift its primary focus from the protection of public lands to the protection of communities that are fighting to safeguard their environments, their health, and their cultures. With these goals, I am proud to say that the Law Center staff has been key to some of the most important environmental



Law Center attorneys and staff work every day to ensure that water is safe for all New Mexicans to drink.

victories that New Mexico has seen in the past two decades, including the passage of critical laws that protect people and the environment from pollution and victories in landmark cases.

Through the generosity of donors, foundations and volunteers, we have grown from one part-time, unpaid attorney to four full-time lawyers and four key staff members who work every day to ensure that water is safe for all New Mexicans to drink, the air is safe for all to breathe, and that our unique cultures are preserved for the future.

We thank you for your support of our work, and hope that you will be with us for the next twenty years as we continue our journey. ✕

Yours truly, Douglas Meiklejohn
Executive Director



“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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Our newest Staff Attorney, Bruce Frederick, was probably expecting a tour of the office and a welcome lunch when he started his job as Law Center Staff Attorney in June.

This issue marks the first 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.

Waste Case Turns Law Center into Community Advocate

by Shelbie Knox

Asked about the Law Center's victory against the Nu-Mex medical waste incinerator, Antonio Lujan remembers that "The townspeople had already organized themselves under the banner of 'Concerned Citizens of Sunland Park' to fight the proposed Nu-Mex landfill when the incinerator opened and was completely unregulated. There were hypodermic needles laying around, there were no pollution controls, and the place would burn at night." Lujan, who then worked as a community organizer for the Diocese of Las Cruces, also remembers that residents developed allergies and rashes, and children at nearby schools became sick from the odors. "The Bishop heard about the landfill and incinerator and asked me to check things out; it turned into a two-and-a-half year long project."

Sharing common concerns about incinerators and landfills, Douglas Meiklejohn met members of Concerned Citizens around 1990. Lujan explained that this was the first time in New Mexico that a grassroots Hispanic community formed an alliance with environmental groups. "We worked with environmentalists like Lynda Taylor at the Southwest Research and Information Center and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center – that had never been done before."

For me, the significance was the effectiveness of a passionate grassroots organization that

had technical expertise within its reach."

While the State seemed ready to grant the landfill a ten-year permit without conditions, Concerned Citizens fought for the permit to be denied outright. In addition, the group confronted a system in which Nu-Mex hired Sunland Park's mayor and city attorney as lobbyists, and the town's state senator as its attorney.

"This was a true David-and-Goliath type battle," recounts Lujan. "The community sold enchiladas and gorditas as a way to raise funds to hire expert witnesses." In a major victory, Concerned Citizens and the Law Center persuaded the State to reverse its position by taking into account the air emissions from the smokestack – a position that led to the closure of the incinerator. In addition, the State also issued a five-year landfill permit with several stringent conditions, including a liner requirement and water quality monitoring – conditions never imposed before.

This case helped the Law Center successfully lobby for strict incinerator regulations, including buffer zones of at least one mile between people and waste-burning facilities. No incinerators have since been built in New Mexico.

The Law Center is now the only not-for-profit law firm specializing in environmental justice issues in New Mexico. Meiklejohn's passion for solid



Concerned Citizens of Sunland Park leader Isabel Santos rallies her neighbors at a protest of the Nu-Mex landfill during a subsequent permitting proceeding.

waste reform remains unquenched – he has worked with communities throughout the state to make New Mexico home to some of the most protective laws and regulations in the country, especially with regard to protecting vulnerable communities.

Lujan, now a state representative from Las Cruces, served on the Law Center's Board of Directors for ten years, including a term as its president. He is proud of how the organization has grown during the past twenty years. "The Law Center is the most important environmental organization in New Mexico today," he states. "It has credibility in the legislature, credibility with communities, and it always takes on the right issues." 



1987

Opens in September; first hearing focuses on state trust lands



1988

Files first lawsuit in federal court to halt logging while appeal was pending with Forest Service; stay granted



1989

In a public lands victory, forces Forest Service to retract and reconsider a decision to sell 1,700 acres of timber on Mt. Taylor

Images: 1987: John Vavruska • 1988: Joanie Berde, Carson ForestWatch • 1989: Joanie Berde, Carson ForestWatch

“Stop! You are Breaking our Hearts!

Don't Mine Indian Clay”

by Shelbie Knox

“**S**top! You are Breaking our Hearts! Don't Mine Indian Clay.” The sign held by the woman at the entrance to the Oglebay Norton mica mine echoed the sentiments of the Picuris People who stood shoulder to shoulder with her, blocking trucks from entering the mine in November 2002. Despite the show of public opposition to both the mine and the Velarde-based mill, however, things looked bleak.

The facility had grown into the largest mica mine west of the Mississippi River, and the company was seeking a permit to expand the site. While the Law Center was fighting hard to ensure that the permit included provisions to protect the environment and mitigate cultural impacts, there was little doubt that the mine would continue to grow.

In any other place, this mine would have been an environmental nuisance. But here at Picuris, the mine was eating away at a culture that had depended upon the micaceous clay that had been found at the site since time immemorial, according to the tribe's elder potters. “The clay is not only a pot,” describes former Picuris Governor Gerald Nailor, recounting the importance of the earth to his People. “It teaches you how to live. It guides you. It gives you strength.”

The Law Center began its representation of Picuris Pueblo in 1998. The Pueblo had approached Law Center attorneys a year earlier to help it defeat a proposed copper mine, but had been successful in

working with neighbors to rally enough community opposition to scuttle the project. Their success gave them hope that they could stop the grievous mica mine. Unfortunately for the tribe, “It was easier to stop a mine that didn't exist,” recounts Richard Mermejo, former Mine Reclamation Liaison and Picuris Governor, “than to stop a mine that was already in the ground, growing every year.” Six years after their copper mine victory, they would be holding their second protest at the mine, wondering if the destruction would ever stop.

“We are a small community going up against a giant corporation, with its fleet of lawyers and vice-presidents; we can use all of the help that we can get. While our People picket the mine in protest, the New Mexico Environmental Law Center is working to stop the mine in the courts.”

Unbeknownst to the public or the mining company, the Pueblo adopted a new legal strategy in 2001. While Law Center attorneys still worked to limit the company's permits, the tribal government decided to pursue a long-shot. The Law Center allied itself with Indian law experts Richard Hughes and Curtis



The Picuris People fought the largest mica mine west of the Mississippi River; the mine's ore was used primarily for wallboard and joint compound. Image: LightHawk, 1999

Berkey along with the Western Environmental Law Center to pursue an aboriginal title claim for the land on which the mine was sited. The premise? That Picuris Pueblo had never given up the land, which had been bought by mining companies for \$5.00/acre from the U.S. government under the federal 1872 Mining Law.

The world's foremost academic experts on Tiwa culture worked with Pueblo members to document the oral history pertaining to the site, while pottery experts proved that ancient pottery sherds originated in the clay pits at the site. In the end, the case was strong enough that the Pueblo was able to negotiate with the mining companies that had operated the mine, achieving the unimaginable: the return of the land to the Picuris People. The day that the land was returned to the Pueblo was bittersweet



1990

Successfully advocates for passage of the New Mexico Solid Waste Act



1991

Represents Citizens of Sunland Park in hearings to stop permits for a medical waste incinerator and landfill. The incinerator was closed



1992

Awards first annual Karl Souder Water Protection Award for significant protection of New Mexico's water

Story Continued page 8 >

Jeanie Cragin

Environmental Superwoman

by Shelbie Knox



“The average individual can no longer expect to change the course of a hearing with persuasive emotional statements. Decision makers listen to attorneys and experts. The mining company comes armed with multiple attorneys, numbers of credentialed experts, lobbyists in the hallways – all designed to intimidate, overpower and exhaust the citizens who dare mount any opposition.”

Those words were written by a woman who has become intimately acquainted with the realities of trying to protect a place she loves from pollution. Beginning in 1991, Jeanie Cragin and her neighbors stopped the proposed Placer Dome gold mine near Cerrillos, then moved on to tackle the Cunningham Hill cyanide heap-leach gold mine in the Ortiz Mountains, which had become contaminated during the 1970s and 1980s.

“I remember that we – the Friends of Santa Fe County – had to find a lawyer after we showed up at a discharge permit hearing and the hearing officer wouldn’t recognize us,” she recalls. “Even though hydrologist Art Montana was an integral member of Friends of Santa Fe County, the State didn’t allow us to fully participate until we were represented by counsel. That is when we got the Law Center involved. Attorneys Doug Meiklejohn and Doug Wolf not only knew the law, but they were respected by the regulators, and that respect was transferred to us during those proceedings.”

Over the next several years, Friends worked on several tracks to force the cleanup of the Cunningham Hill site, including a federal Clean Water Act lawsuit. Eventually LAC Minerals Inc., owners of Cunningham Hill mine, and previous mine operators, were forced to the settlement negotiation table. Represented by former Law Center attorney

Doug Wolf, Friends reached an agreement that created the 1,350 acre Ortiz Mountain Educational Preserve and led to the reclamation of the site, including the cleanup of two plumes of contaminated groundwater beneath the mine.

“Watching Doug Wolf in action was like watching Jack the Giant Killer. Here was one guy working all-nighters, without any office help, up against a battery of attorneys on the other side,” says Jeanie.

While Friends was fortunate to get *pro bono* assistance from other attorneys during the fight, “it hit home that you can’t just have any attorney representing you in a case like this...you need someone remarkable, and the Law Center has always



Jeanie also worked closely with Law Center staff to pass the New Mexico Mining Act of 1993. This law, precipitated in part by the Cunningham Hill mine reclamation fight, became the most stringent hardrock mining law in the U.S.

Image: Courtesy of Jeanie Cragin

been home to remarkable attorneys.”

Jeanie also worked closely with Law Center staff to pass the New Mexico Mining Act of 1993. This law, precipitated in part by the Cunningham Hill mine reclamation fight, became the most stringent hardrock mining law in the U.S. Under the leadership of N.M. Representative Gary King (now Attorney General of New Mexico), it took three years to get the legislation passed. “Doug Meiklejohn’s influence was tremendous in the passage of that law,” she remembers. “Without him, the law and regulations would likely not have been so strong – and New Mexico’s land and water would not be so well protected.”

In addition to her work as citizen activist and client, Jeanie Cragin joined our Board of Directors in 1996, and has served several stints as President. ❖



1993

Integrally involved with enactment of NM Mining Act one of the most stringent hardrock mining acts in the US.



1994

Accepts request by Taos Pueblo to prevent expansion of Taos Municipal Airport, NMELC’s longest-running case



1995

LAC Minerals abandons plans to continue mining in the Ortiz Mountains, SF County

Images: 1995: LightHawk

Law Center's Secret Weapons

Don and Lorraine Goldman

by Shelby Knox

Don and Lorraine Goldman hardly look like the Law Center's secret weapons, but they are. Not only have they been long-time financial donors, but Don has been a valued volunteer for the past five years.

During that time, he has spent his winters slogging through the daily list of bills generated by the New Mexico state legislature, ferreting out legislation that could potentially wreak environmental havoc – and which our adversaries are hoping the Law Center will miss.

In addition to his work as our legislative analyst, Don did an amazing job writing the Law Center's history for our 15th

anniversary (found on the News page of our website, next to the *Green Fire Report* links.)

Don and Lorraine's support of the Law Center began in 1998 when Lorraine brought Doug Meiklejohn a popsicle to help him get through the afternoon heat at an environmental fair. Sharing strong environmental ethics and the belief that government exists to protect its citizenry, the three began a friendship that has spanned two decades.



Image: Courtesy of Don and Lorraine Goldman

Lorraine marvels at the early days of the Law Center. "At non-profits, you often get run down by the feeling that problems are just too big to be tackled," she says. "But there was Doug – and his family – making a real sacrifice for their beliefs.

He left a good paying job to tilt at windmills and take on what seemed to be an impossible dream. But he's managed to make that dream very

Story Continued page 8>

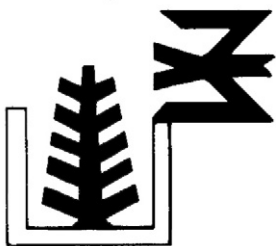
Cathie Sullivan

Leaving her Mark on the Law Center

by Shelby Knox

Over the past twenty years, few things have remained constant about the Law Center. The staff have changed, the offices have changed... even the focus of the organization has shifted during the past two decades. But also celebrating a 20th anniversary this year is our logo.

The logo was the brainchild of designer Cathie Sullivan, who was tasked with developing the mark for the organization shortly before it



"Before I became a professional screenprinter, my background was in biology and ecology," says Cathie, "so I was naturally drawn to the environmental focus of the Law Center when they asked me to volunteer."

opened its doors.

"When I thought about defending the environment, I immediately thought of Mimbres pottery. It is extremely rich in natural imagery, yet has a linear geometry," she recalls, referring to the black and white

pottery crafted by the people who inhabited the Gila Mountains 1,000 years ago. From that inspiration the Law Center's iconic bird-and-tree logo was born, and has stayed with the Law

Story Continued page 8>



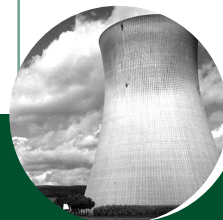
1996

The Law Center and LAC Minerals settle the Cunningham Hill mining case in the Ortiz Mountains



1997

Informs US EPA and Navajo Nation EPA of the environmental injustice of proposed uranium mines



1998

Files first brief in the ENDAUM uranium proceeding before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Images: 1996: LAC Minerals

Law Center Helps Win Victories for Surface Waters, Public Lands

by Sarah Pilch and Eric Jantz

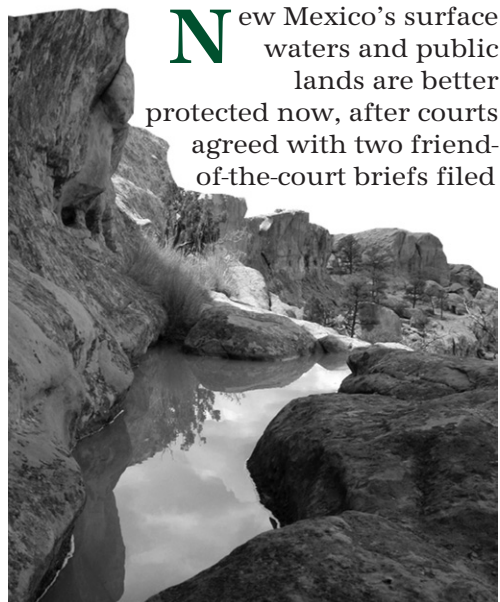


Image: Darla Hallmark | Agency: Dreamstime.com

New Mexico's surface waters and public lands are better protected now, after courts agreed with two friend-of-the-court briefs filed

by the Law Center in 2005.

Recently, the US Supreme Court obliterated protection for many of New Mexico's surface waters when it handed down two decisions, including a ruling that "non-navigable, isolated, intrastate" waters were no longer protected under the federal Clean Water Act.

Because these rulings affected more than 80% of New Mexico's surface waters, the New Mexico Water Quality Commission revised the regulatory language to affirm the State's broad authority over all surface waters within state boundaries. This revision was appealed by several industry groups. Representing the Concerned Citizens

for Clean Water in Clovis, the Law Center filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the State and several conservation groups. In May 2007, the Court of Appeals upheld the Commission's revised language, handing a victory to the Law Center's client and allies, and New Mexico's surface waters.

In southwestern New Mexico, we won a victory in June 2007 when the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that cattle watering-rights do not give ranchers the implicit right to graze their cattle on public lands. This case stemmed from a lawsuit filed by Roy and Shellie Walker,

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Fighting for Clean Up at Phelps Dodge Tyrone Mine

by Bruce Frederick

Phelps Dodge's Tyrone mine facility covers nearly 10,000 acres of land and contains over a billion tons of crushed waste rock and ore piles derived mostly from two huge open pit copper mines. The company mines the copper by sprinkling thousands of acre-feet of acidic solution onto the ore piles per year; the solution dissolves copper from the ore as it drains through the pile, and is then collected in the natural drainages underlying the piles and piped to a copper extraction plant.

its Tyrone closure permit to the NM Court of Appeals in 2005, the Court upheld every permit condition but two, ruling that the NM Water Quality Control Commission must reexamine whether or not the Tyrone mine facility is a "place of withdrawal of water for present or reasonably foreseeable future use." Phelps Dodge argues that the mine facility is not, and will not be, a place of withdrawal, and therefore is not protected under the State's Water Quality Act. Using this strategy, the company hopes to avoid cleaning

contamination beneath its mine facility and also to avoid re-grading and covering most of its waste rock and ore piles.

In a hearing before the Commission this summer, the Law Center represents the Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP), which is aligned with the New Mexico Environment Department in arguing that the site is indeed a place of withdrawal, and that the company must observe its strict reclamation requirements. As this issue goes to print, we are awaiting a decision from the Commission. ✕

When Phelps Dodge appealed

up the extensive groundwater



1999

Represents acequia associations and individuals fighting to preserve traditional NM agriculture



2000

Co-founds the New Mexico Mining Act Network, a coalition of grassroots organizations and experts



2001

Helps to defeat proposed legislation that would give \$30 million in subsidies to the nuclear industry

Images: 1999: Don Usner • 2000: LightHawk

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Landmark Fights Underway

by Eric Jantz

Eleven years after filing their first brief in the Crownpoint uranium case, Law Center attorneys filed a major brief in their recent federal lawsuit against the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on June 22.

In the brief they write, “The NRC’s decisions must be reversed because they fail to ensure that the public health, safety and the environment will be protected from air and groundwater contamination if Hydro Resources, Inc. is allowed to mine uranium under its license.” Soon after our filing, the Navajo Nation filed a friend-of-the-court brief

in support of our case. We have requested oral arguments before the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, and are awaiting an answer to this request.

In a separate matter, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeks to issue a “Generic Environmental Impact Statement” (GEIS) to address what it labels “generic” issues associated with in situ leach uranium mining nationwide. Such issues could include groundwater restoration, hydrology, and environmental justice.

The Law Center and its clients, the Haaku Water Office of Acoma Pueblo and, the Southwest Research and Information Center, are involved in

this process, which has extraordinary implications for New Mexico and the western United States. If the NRC is allowed to finalize the GEIS, it will:

1) allow uranium mining companies to avoid in-depth environmental analysis in the form of a site specific environmental impact statement; 2) increase the speed at which the NRC issues nuclear licenses to ISL mining companies; and 3) severely restrict the amount of public input on a specific mining project.

The public comment period ends on October 8. See nmenvirolaw.org/news for information on how to submit comments to the NRC. ✕

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who had their grazing leases cancelled and their cattle removed from the Gila National Forest after they refused to reduce the size of their herd due to drought conditions and overgrazing. Claiming that the federal government was “taking” their property, the Walkers sued the United States for \$10 million. Working with other attorneys, the Law Center served as local counsel for the NM Wildlife Federation, the National Wildlife Federation, and the NM Council of Trout Unlimited, and filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the federal government. ✕

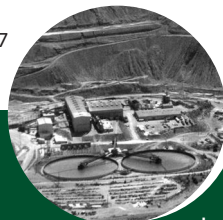
For more information on all of the cases described here, along with casework that we just couldn't fit here, please see the html version of the Summer 2007 Green Fire Report, available at nmenvirolaw.org/news.



Law Center Docket 2006- 2007
*cases closed in 2006 | **cases closed in 2007

2002

Protests with Picuris Pueblo and Vecinos del Rio at entrances to Oglebay Norton and Velarde Mica mines



2003

Defeats Phelps Dodge's attempts in the State Legislature to exempt mines from reclamation requirements



2004

Prevents lease sales by the BLM of sacred Navajo lands near Counselor Chapter for oil and gas development

Chaparral Landfill

Investigates New Site

by Douglas Meiklejohn

In 2005, the Law Center helped to win a very significant victory in the New Mexico Supreme Court by filing a friend-of-the-court brief and participating in the argument that persuaded the Court to issue its groundbreaking decision in the matter involving the proposed landfill in Chaparral. That decision mandates that the New Mexico Environment Department take into account “quality of life” concerns and the impacts of proliferation of

industrial and waste facilities on a community when it is deciding whether to issue a permit for a landfill.

Now the Law Center is representing the Colonias Development Council in the limited re-hearing ordered by the Supreme Court in order to persuade the Environment Department not to allow the addition of another landfill in the community, which would be located less than half a mile from

homes in Chaparral.

The limited re-hearing was scheduled to begin on July 19th, but it has been postponed for a year so that the company, Waste Connections, Inc. can investigate a new proposed site for the landfill. We and the Colonias Development Council are hopeful that this possible relocation of the landfill will provide a solution that is acceptable to both the community and Waste Connections, Inc. ❧

< Mining Indian Clay Story from page 3

for its people. Tribal members were relieved that the destruction had finally ended, but many could not staunch their tears when they saw the immensity of the damage at the site, feeling that they would never be able to heal such a wound. Yet in the same spirit of its fight to stop the mining, Picuris Pueblo is working to reclaim the site. Joe Quanchello, a religious leader at the Pueblo, rallied potters in 2005, enjoining “Maybe we have been challenged by Mother Earth to heal her in these circumstances, whether there is clay or not. We must do what we can do.”

And the Pueblo has responded. Already, it has nearly reclaimed one of the two open pits, and vegetation is poking up through the topsoil that serves as a healing scab over the wound. Dodging bulldozers and backhoes, potters have been heartened to find clay deposits that survived the mining process. The Law Center continues to represent the tribe as it works to reclaim the site. ❧



2005

Picuris Pueblo regains sacred lands through settlement negotiations

< Secret Weapons Story from page 5

possible.” Don is quick to add that, “Now Doug has been joined by a staff of dedicated individuals, all of whom have forsaken jobs with real paychecks to come here because they believe in the ethic and the work being done by the Law Center.”

“Sometimes it is incredibly difficult to bring disenfranchised people together to take on these fights,” posits Lorraine, but it is the Law Center’s connection with its clients that makes it such a powerful force. “It is not the Law Center leading these fights, but these groups, with the help of the Law Center. That makes communities very powerful.”

Asked why they give to the Law Center, Don smiles and shrugs. “We only support the causes we believe in, and your results speak for themselves.”

We thank Don and Lorraine for the long-standing support (including that popsicle), and for their willingness to answer the call for help! ❧



2006

Successfully advocates for the amendment to the Solid Waste Management Regulation, protecting low-income communities

< Cathie Sullivan Story from page 5

Center ever since. From the same place, she drew inspiration for the design of the newsletter’s masthead, creating a natural tableau that represented the Law Center’s focus on protecting public lands.

“Before I became a professional screenprinter, my background was in biology and ecology,” says Cathie, “so I was naturally drawn to the environmental focus of the Law Center when they asked me to volunteer.” As a citizen activist who has focused for years on the health impacts of low-level ionizing radiation, especially with regard to Los Alamos National Laboratory, she understands the value of non-profit law firm that represents citizens in environmental matters. “If we are going to defend New Mexico’s environment, we must have talented attorneys working to bring corporations to account.”

We thank Cathie for her valuable contribution to the Law Center’s identity, and for her long-standing support of our work. ❧



2007

Helps win NM Supreme Court ruling that water rights do not give ranchers grazing rights on public lands

Newest Addition to the Law Center's Legal Team

by Shelby Knox



Our newest Staff Attorney, Bruce Frederick, was probably expecting a tour of the office and a welcome lunch when he started his job as Law Center Staff Attorney in June. Instead, he was unceremoniously greeted with the hundreds of files that comprise our eight-year-old case against Phelps Dodge Mining Co.—part of the largest copper mining company in the world.

Fortunately, Bruce is uniquely qualified for the challenge.

Not only has he practiced as an environmental law attorney for fourteen years, but Bruce also holds degrees in geology and hydrology.

“With a Bachelor’s degree in geology, I was likely going to head to the oil fields. Fortunately, the oil business hit a bust just as I was graduating, so I came to New Mexico where I earned a Master’s Degree in hydrology, with the new goal of saving the world,” he remembers.

Previous to earning his law degree, Bruce worked for the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division (the forerunner to the

“Protection of water resources should be one of the highest priorities for all New Mexicans, and the Law Center puts that belief into practice,” says Bruce.

Image: Don Usner

Environment Department) as a hydrologist, where he investigated groundwater contamination caused by gasoline and solvents leaked from underground storage tanks and industrial facilities.

Working with State lawyers, Bruce soon came to the realization that his technical knowledge would prove to be a tremendous asset for a career in environmental law. Earning his J.D. from the University of New Mexico in 1993, he worked in the private sector and then spent ten years working as a Special Assistant Attorney General on a variety of issues, including mining, oil and gas, local land use, and water law.

“Protection of water resources should be one of the highest priorities for all New Mexicans, and the Law Center puts that belief into practice,” says Bruce. “I hope that my technical background and legal experience will help ensure that justice is realized at sites like the Phelps Dodge copper mines, so that groundwater is protected for generations to come.”



**Thera
Hubler**

Summer Volunteer

by Juana Colón

As she prepares to enter her senior year in high school, Thera Hubler, the Law Center summer volunteer, wanted to find out more about environmental law. She has been interested in the conservation of the environment from a very young age since her family comes to Santa Fe every year to spend their summers camping. “We’re living in a tent, but have electricity,” says Thera. During the rest of the year the family with six daughters lives in Urbana, Illinois. Thera learned about the Law Center through her eldest sister, Ines, who also volunteered here one summer and has since graduated from college.

It’s a tradition in the Hubler family that the children volunteer or intern during the summers of their high school years. Last summer, Thera volunteered for the Bioneers and the summer before that she worked at the School of American Research.

Thera has been very busy doing various office tasks and some research for the Law Center staff. “I like doing the simple tasks but every once in a while I get a challenge.” When asked what she thinks about her work at the Law Center, Thera replied, “It’s interesting. I’m learning a lot.” She especially enjoyed doing research regarding social impacts of landfills on communities - how the case evolved, what has happened in the past and if it was an arguable case. “I think it’s cool that you guys do all this stuff.” She is interested in studying business and enjoys the outdoors and playing soccer.



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! In October, we’ll start our fifth annual Mother Earth, Father Sky lecture series and host our 20th anniversary kick-off party in Santa Fe. From there, we’ll go on the road, visiting towns across New Mexico throughout the next year. We’ll keep you posted!

Law Center Endowment Fund

Established by Board Member

by Kelly Egolf

As a resident of Cerrillos during the 1990s, Renee became involved with the Law Center when it represented citizens' groups fighting gold mining in Cerrillos and advocated for state-wide mining reform. Inspired by the energy and devotion of the staff, volunteers and board of the Law Center, she became a Director on the Board of the Law Center in 2001.

Renee feels that supporting environmental justice is "key to the environmental movement because the people most affected by environmental degradation are the disenfranchised and poor, who have no resources to stave off intrusions in their communities. The Law Center's job is to protect those without voices in legal proceedings and to give them voices to fight for themselves."

Through her close relationship with Bob Stark of the New Mexico Community Foundation, Renee realized that her charitable giving could create a legacy of giving to support the environmental justice work she loves. With a generous gift of \$35,000, Renee established the New Mexico Environmental Law Center Endowment, a permanent endowment that will generate income for the Law Center for many generations to come.

The timing of Renee's generosity to the Law Center was intentional. As the Law Center moves into its 20th year of serving New Mexico communities and protecting our environment, she feels endowment giving is important because it contributes so much to long-term strategic planning. It is also a wonderful estate planning tool for

donors, who can create endowments to be very specific or quite broad to support their charitable goals.

We are tremendously grateful to Renee not only for her generosity, but for her leadership and commitment to environmental justice. ✕

For information on giving to the New Mexico Environmental Law Center Endowment, please contact Sebia Hawkins, Director of Development, at (505) 989-9022 or shawkins@nmelc.org. You can also contact the New Mexico Community Foundation directly and speak with Kimi Green at (505) 820-6860 or kgreen@nmcf.org.

Tom was a true champion for New Mexico's Public Lands

by Douglas Meiklejohn

The Law Center lost a close friend, and the Southwest lost a passionate and effective environmental advocate with the death of Thomas Wooten in August. For decades, Tom was a true champion for New Mexico's public lands, fighting for rangeland reform, riparian enhancement, wildlife protection and wilderness designations.

Fervor to protect the state's delicate ecology led Tom to the Law Center in 1993, when he was represented,

along with other Las Cruces-area conservationists, in an unsuccessful effort to prevent grazing in a wilderness study area.

That year, the Law Center also represented Tom when he successfully challenged the Bureau of Land Management's efforts to block public participation in the Flying W grazing allotment case.

Along with his wife, Eleanor, Tom was a tremendous supporter of the Law Center and numerous other environmental organizations

Image: Courtesy of Eleanor Wooten



throughout the Southwest. We will dearly miss his ardent environmental ethic, his wit and his encouragement. ✕



Become a member of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center! Individual memberships begin at \$35.00 per year, and dues are tax-deductible. Call 989-9022 or see nmenvirolaw.org/join us for more information.

Board Member Frank Sanchez Recognized

The Law Center Board and staff congratulate Board member Frank I. Sanchez, who was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of New Mexico this spring. Frank, a Roswell resident who has served on our Board since 1994, was honored by the university for nearly forty years of service as a community organizer, political advocate, philanthropic advisor and public servant in New Mexico and the Southwest. During that time, Frank has been a tireless promoter for social, economic and environmental justice, and we have been privileged to work with him. 



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That means more money to protect our ground water and surface water, air quality, and sacred lands!

For more information, call Sebia Hawkins at 989.9022 ext. 27 or email shawkins@nmelc.org

Development Department **NEWS FLASH!**

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Join this valued group of supporters today. Contact Sebia Hawkins, Director of Development, at 505.989.9022 ext. 27 for more information.

Nominations Open

Do you know someone who has accomplished great things for New Mexico's environment? What about a Toxic Turkey? Let us know! Nominations are now open for the 2007 New Mexico Environmental Awards – deadline is September 20 -- see the enclosed form for more information!

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.



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Environmental Law Center

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