

THE PINE CONE

Official Newsletter of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation



Albuquerque
WILDLIFE
Federation

conservationists since 1914

April 2026

Wildlife Needs Dark Skies

Among the many perks of AWF's volunteer ecological restoration projects are the night skies. We often camp far from any sources of light pollution – like out in El Malpais or deep in the San Mateo Mountains – and after dark we can be treated to a spectacular starfield and the riverine Milky Way.

As inspiring as they are for us, dark skies are absolutely essential for wildlife. Studies have found that light pollution disrupts the circadian rhythms and migratory patterns of animals ranging from sea turtles to mountain lions, altering the time of day that birds are active and increasing the mortality of species that rely on moonlight to guide their migrations. Light pollution is one factor driving the catastrophic collapse of insect populations, which is impacting global food webs.

Light pollution from ground-based sources has increased by as much as 10% a year since 2011, and now there are new threats from above.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently considering two proposals that would massively increase the amount of light produced by artificial satellites. First, Elon Musk's company SpaceX is seeking to put a million new satellites in orbit to serve as data centers. If approved, this single proposal would multiply the number of satellites currently orbiting earth by 70 times.



In addition, a company called Reflect Orbital is seeking permission to launch large, mirrored satellites that would reflect beams of sunlight back to earth, creating 5-kilometer circles of bright light to illuminate cities, run solar farms, or light up farming or industrial facilities all night. The initial satellites would produce as much light as 1,000 moons; by 2035, larger versions would be as bright as 360,000 moons. The company aims to put 50,000 in orbit by 2035.

As a general rule, the FCC does not require any sort of environmental review for satellites because satellite operations “normally do not have significant effects on the human environment.” In this case, groups like Dark Sky International and astronomy organizations around the world are opposing the proposals, warning that they would permanently scar the night sky.

So far, these proposals have not received much attention. If the public learns about them, and opposition grows, it is not too late to prevent the loss of our dark skies. So spread the word, contact your congressional representatives, and follow groups like [Dark Sky International](#) to learn how you can become more involved.

Inside this Issue:

| | |
|--|-------|
| April Educational Presentation..... | pg 2 |
| April Restoration Projects..... | pg 3 |
| Recap of March Restoration Projects..... | pg 5 |
| Events of Interest..... | pg 7 |
| Membership Form..... | pg 10 |

Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Secretary

APRIL 9, 2026 MEETING: Dark Sky Land

Date: Thursday, April 9, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Location: Albuquerque Friends Meeting House
1600 5th Street Northwest

Topic: The Dark Sky Land Project

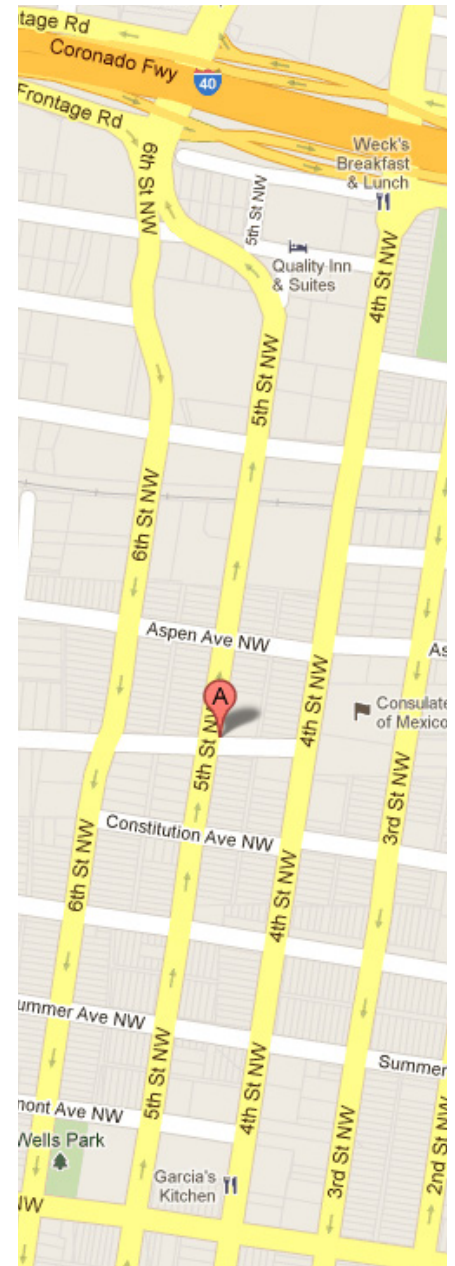
At this month's meeting, we will hear a presentation from Marisela La Grave about her project, Dark Sky Land, a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to connecting people to land, nature and the cosmos. Its mission is to preserve dark skies and night habitat on a 600-mile Astro-Wilderness corridor in western New Mexico. Dark Sky Land designs and hosts outreach events projects each year in locations throughout the Astro-Wilderness corridor and beyond, attracting astronomers, conservationists, creators, and the general public. Along with her presentation, Marisela plans to screen two brief films, including a trailer from a film in progress about Dark Sky Land.

Speaker Bio: Marisela la Grave

Marisela La Grave is originally from Caracas and now lives in New Mexico where she is an artist, filmmaker, and creator of projects that explore the nature of perception, phenomenology, consciousness, and temporality. Along with founding Dark Sky Land, Marisela is also a co-founder and the Artistic Director of Magnetic Laboratorium, a New York and Paris-based multimedia art studio.

Directions to the Meeting

The Albuquerque Friends Meeting House is located at the corner of 5th and Bellamah. From I-40, take the 6th street exit, then South to Bellamah.



APRIL 10-12, 2026 SERVICE PROJECT: Wolf Creek, Ft. Union Ranch

LOCATION: Ft. Union Ranch near Watrous, NM

THE PROJECT: Join us for AWF’s first weekend-long restoration project of the season, where we will be partnering with Hermits Peak Watershed Alliance to continue the restoration of Wolf Creek on Fort Union Ranch. During this project, volunteers will hand-build rock restoration structures designed by Bill Zeedyk to help hold more water on the landscape.

SCHEDULE: Friday, April 10 – Sunday, April 12

Volunteers do not need to be present for the entire weekend to participate. You are welcome to join us just for the work day Saturday, or camp for just one of the two nights.

GEAR: Bring everything you need for a weekend of camping and restoration work, including work gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. We will be working in and around the flowing creek, so we recommend bringing a change of shoes, and boots you don’t mind getting wet or muddy. Rain gear, layers, warm clothes for the evenings, and plenty of water are essential. **Note that we will have access to the Marshall House at Ft. Union Ranch, which provides for indoor “camping” and gathering options in case of bad weather.**

FOOD: AWF will provide breakfast burritos on Saturday morning and bison or veggie burgers on Saturday evening. Please bring a dish to share for the Saturday potluck dinner, along with your own lunches, Friday dinner, Sunday breakfast, and lots of water!

TO SIGN UP: Email Kristina at abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com
Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.



2026 RESTORATION PROJECTS CALENDAR

- March 7.....Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge
- March 21.....Rio Puerco
- April 10-12.....Wolf Creek, Ft. Union Ranch
- April 18.....Cedro Creek, Tijeras
- June 19-21.....Rito Cafe, Jemez Mountains
- July 10-12.....Polvadera Creek, Jemez Mountains
- August 14-16.....Manuelitas Creek, near Las Vegas
- September 4-6.....Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns
- October 2-4.....Cebolla Canyon, El Malpais
- October 23-25.....Rio Embudo, Dixon
- November 7.....Cedro Creek, Tijeras

AWF BOARD 2026

OFFICERS

- President – Phil Carter*
- Vice President – Cameron Weber*
- Treasurer – Laurie Marnell*
- Secretary – Kristina G. Fisher*

DIRECTORS

- Abe Aufdermauer*
- Rod Flores*
- Finn Gregor*
- Lia Griesser*
- Toby Rosenblatt*
- Michael “Scial” Scialdone*
- Hamish Thomson*
- Bob Tilley*
- Alexcia Trujillo*
- Bill Zeedyk - Director Emeritus*

APRIL 18, 2026 SERVICE PROJECT: Cedro Creek

LOCATION: Cedro Creek in the Sandia Mountains, near Tijeras, NM

THE PROJECT: We are holding a bonus day project at Cedro Creek this year since the government shutdown last October prevented us from completing the restoration work we had planned for that project.

Cedro Creek is a legacy site that AWF has been working to restore since 1992. During this project, we will repair and add to some of the rock structures we have built in past years that capture sediment, stabilize the channel, hold more water on the landscape, and grow more vegetation for wildlife.

SCHEDULE: Saturday, April 18, 9:00-4:00

GEAR: Bring everything you need for a day of outdoor work, including gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, sunglasses, and sun-screen. Dress in layers to be prepared for New Mexico's variable weather.

FOOD: Please bring snacks, your own lunch, and plenty of water.

TO SIGN UP: Email Scial at rioscial@gmail.com

Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.



RECAP OF MARCH 7, 2026 PROJECT: VALLE DE ORO

Thanks, Volunteers!

Dillon Alexander
 Teagan Allen
 Alyssa Alires
 Abe Aufdermauer
 Gabriela Baca
 Rich Besser
 Caitlyn Bizzell
 Aryne Chacon
 Sean D. Coston
 Tanya Critchfield
 Willow Cunningham
 Davis Karim Family
 Graeme Davis
 Jenny Davis
 Maisie Davis
 Phoebe Davis
 Delphine Douglass
 Candace Duran
 Russ Duran
 Bella Elwell
 Tomasz Falkowski
 Kristina G. Fisher
 Jennifer Hopper
 Brooklyn Gallegos
 Anastasia Gamez
 Aurora Goldhamer
 John Grabowska
 Monica Grabowska
 Finn Gregor
 Bethany Jorgensen
 Bianca Kastendieck
 Luke Kastendieck
 Guruder Khalsa
 Annalise Kerwin
 Linnea
 Jennifer Lloyd
 Victor Martinez
 Charlie Moore
 Catherine Mondragon
 Sarah Muller
 Henry Newcomb
 Kate Newcomb
 Noel Olivas
 Audrey Overmyer
 Miranda Padilla
 Jillene Pelletier-Hervill
 Alex Peña
 Alexa Pik
 Jessica Rasmussen
 Kiara Riboni
 Toby Rosenblatt
 Lina Sanchez
 Hamish Thomson
 Naomi Walker
 Cameron Weber
 Jim Werbel
 Brooke Woodmansee



AWF's first volunteer ecological restoration service project of the year took place on a beautiful day in early March at the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. We were joined by several partners, including a class from the University of New Mexico, a group from UNM-Taos, Navigator Scouts, and Jaguars for Positive Change from Atrisco Heritage High School. This big group of eager volunteers planted several varieties of native grasses and milkweed in the Playa section of the refuge, and constructed nesting boxes for barn owls and kestrels or screech owls.

A pizza lunch from Dion's was provided for everyone by Jaguars for Positive Change. The Jaguars have been partnering with AWF at the Valle de Oro for the last 14 years, thanks to their longtime sponsor, Tanya Critchfield. Tanya is retiring from Atrisco Heritage at the end of this school year, and her inspiring leadership will be greatly missed. Tanya and her students have collectively volunteered hundreds of hours at Valle de Oro, and the legacy of their efforts can be seen in the maturing trees and thriving wetland habitats that benefit all the wildlife and humans who enjoy the Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge.



RECAP OF MARCH 21, 2026 PROJECT: RIO PUERCO

Thanks, Volunteers!

Abe Aufdermauer
Peter Callen
Phil Carter
Zach Causey
Kristina G. Fisher
Cullen Hallmark
Jennifer Hopper
Maria Lohmann
Jared Lucian
Luke Morrell
Emma Overstreet
Felipe Perez III
Toby Rosenblatt
Aaliyah Salazar
Scial
Hamish Thomson
Alexcia Trujillo



On March 21, AWF volunteers joined our friends at Rio Grande Return to help restore a section of the Rio Puerco, near Cuba, New Mexico. The Rio Puerco is one of the most degraded watersheds in the nation, with the streambed deeply incised and denuded of its native wetlands. Volunteers spent Saturday planting coyote willows and cottonwoods on streambanks that had been cleared of invasive vegetation (mostly tamarisk and Russian olives).

This project is part of an innovative partnership with the State Land Office. Rio Grande Return is leasing this section of State Trust Land through a first-of-its-kind Stewardship Lease. Instead of using the land for livestock grazing or extractive development, Rio Grande Return's goal is to restore the healthy functioning of the watershed, supported by grant funding from the New Mexico Environment Department. It was exciting for AWF to contribute to this effort, and we hope it will serve as a model that can be replicated on other state trust lands.



UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Workshop on Beaver Coexistence Strategies

**THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 5:30 pm, Tierra Amarilla
UPPER CHAMA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Join us for a free Living with Beaver workshop, where we'll share co-existence strategies for farmers, rancher, and acequeros. We'll cover: different management tools for beaver co-existence; resources for pond levelers, culvert protection, exclosures, and other infrastructure solutions; and cost-share programs and technical assistance available to you. Come share your own beaver experience, tools and tricks!

To sign up: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/bj8ey7d>



Plant Willows, Restore Wetlands

**SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 9:00 a.m., La Jara Canyon Wetlands in Taos
AMIGOS BRAVOS**

Beavers are critical for wetland restoration. By planting willows, you will help create habitat for beavers to migrate upstream, where they can build dams that will store water and improve biodiversity in the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed. Elliot Hendry from Amigos Bravos will lead a caravan from Taos Cow Anglada at 8:30 a.m. Volunteers can meet there or at the La Jara Canyon Wetlands at 9:00 a.m. Please wear pants, closed-toe shoes, and bring a hat, sunscreen, and water. Lunch and tools will be provided. If you have any questions, please reach out to: ehendry@amigosbravos.org

Presentation from the New Mexico Beaver Project

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 5:30 pm, Keeping Together Brewery, Santa Fe

We're hosting an incredible panel of local experts to discuss how these ecosystem engineers are making New Mexico more lush, resilient, and hospitable for us all. Stick around after the talks for a community hang: bring your best beaver stories, burning questions, and a thirst for fantastic local beer!

Fire Ecology and Changing Fire Regimes in the Jemez Mountains

**MONDAY, APRIL 13, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Los Alamos and online
PAJARITO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER (PEEC)**

USGS Field Ecologist, Ellis Margolis will chronicle how scientists piece together the evolution of forest landscapes using tree rings and historical fire patterns to understand how fire once moved across the land. During this talk we will uncover what these clues tell us about how forests in the Jemez have changed, and what forests might look like in the future as climate, fire, and conditions continue to shift.

For more info: <https://peecla.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/peecla/event.jsp?event=67570&>

Discovering the Wild Bees of Northern New Mexico

**TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Los Alamos and online
PAJARITO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER (PEEC)**

New Mexico is home to an astonishing diversity of wild bees—nearly 1,000 species—many of which live quietly around us in forests, deserts, and even our own backyards. In this talk, bee researcher and educator Olivia Caril will introduce the fascinating world of native bees and the plants that depend on them. The talk will include stories from field research and ideas for how anyone can help support pollinators in their own community.

For more info: <https://peecla.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/peecla/event.jsp?event=67575&>



UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST *continued*

Native Flora, Native Fauna: Using Host Plant Data to Guide Conservation Decisions

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 6:30 pm, Christ Lutheran Church, 1701 Arroyo Chamiso Rd, Santa Fe

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

This presentation focuses on new host plant research that is reshaping how we approach butterfly conservation in New Mexico and beyond. It will introduce a comprehensive North American butterfly host plant database, as well as a new native plant restoration tool researchers are hoping to launch across the United States designed to help guide native plant selection for backyard gardens and habitat restoration. For more info:

https://www.npsnm.org/?event=tuesday-april-14-santa-fe-chapter-meeting-and-lecture-630-pm&event_date=2026-04-14

Scat and Tracks Workshop

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 9:00-10:00 a.m., online

SANTA FE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

In this free virtual workshop, Ann Hunkins of the New Mexico Tracking Club and Next Step Wildlife Tracking will cover some of the common animal tracks and signs found in Santa Fe County, share tips for photographing them, and discuss the North American Animal Tracks Database on iNaturalist. For more info & to sign up:

<https://www.santafewatershed.org/steward-workshops/>

Wildlands Fire Chainsaw Course

APRIL 25 & 26; MAY 2 & 3, Luna Community College, Las Vegas, NM

WILDFIRE RESILIENCY TRAINING CENTER

Attend this 32-hour course to become certified in chainsaw operation for wildland firefighting. No experience required.

More info [at this link](#).

Earth Day in the Santa Fe Railyard Park

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Join more than 20 community partners for a free Earth Day event in the Railyard Park! For more info:

<https://railyardpark.org/earthday-2023/>



S-212
WILDLAND FIRE CHAINSAWS
32-HOUR COURSE
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE CONTACT THE WILDFIRE RESILIENCY TRAINING CENTER AT WRTC@LUNA.EDU (505) 454-5323
Dates: Saturday & Sunday, April 25 & 26, 2026
May 2 & 3, 2026
Time: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Location: Luna Community College, 366 Luna Drive, Las Vegas, NM 87701



Earth Day Festival
DON'T MISS
Be sure to bike to the event
Sunday, April 26th
10am-3pm | Balloon Fiesta Park
Tickets FREE in March at
EarthDayFestivalNM.org

Earth Day Festival

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Balloon Fiesta Park, Abq

For tickets and more info:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/free-ticket-general-admission-earth-day-festival-nm>

Love Your Watershed Day

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., DeVargas Park in Santa Fe

SANTA FE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Take part in a river cleanup, enjoy live music by the Partizani Brass Band, and explore hands-on educational activities. For more info: <https://www.santafewatershed.org/lywd-2026/>

Send your event information to: abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com!

Volunteer Stream Restoration Day



**Rio de Las Vacas,
Santa Fe National Forest**

**Curious about beaver habitat restoration?
Join Rio Grande Return to plant willows and
build beaver dam analogues.**



How You Can Participate

- **Volunteer**
Spend a day planting and building instream structures with us. No prior experience is needed, just your enthusiasm and willingness to make a difference.
- **Learn**
Rio Grande Return creating wildlife habitat along Rio de Las Vacas by planting more willows, installing beaver dam analogs, post-assisted log structures and large woody debris. Learn about the role of beaver mimicry in improving water quality, storing water, expanding wetlands and creating habitat for other wildlife.
- **What to Bring**
Lunch, water, warm work gloves, warm clothing (layers), waders or muck boots, hat/sunscreen.

Event Date

Wednesday
April 8, 2026
9:30am - 3pm

Location

Near Hwy 126
and FS Rd 20
(30 minutes from
Cuba, NM)

RSVP by email before the
prior Monday to:

Karen Menetrey
karen@riograndereturn.org
505-603-1328

JOIN US!

Become a Member of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation

The Albuquerque Wildlife Federation is an all-volunteer organization founded by Aldo Leopold in 1914 and dedicated to protecting and restoring New Mexico's wildlife and habitat.

Our work is only possible thanks to the generous support of our members.

If you like the work we do, we hope you will help keep this legacy going by becoming a member or renewing your membership.



AWF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Albuquerque Wildlife Federation | P.O. Box 20225 | Albuquerque, NM 87154

Yes, I'd like to join AWF! This is a gift membership from: _____

name(s): _____

address: _____

city, state, zip: _____

phone: _____ email: _____

- Student _____ \$10
- Individual _____ \$25
- Family _____ \$35
- Sustaining _____ \$50-99
- Patron _____ \$100
- Lifetime _____ \$500 (*one-time payment*)

Dues: \$ _____

Extra Contribution: \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____