

THE PINE CONE

Official Newsletter of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation



Albuquerque
WILDLIFE
Federation

conservationists since 1914

March 2026

Opportunities to Help Wildlife Thrive on Private Lands

While it is a challenging time to expand environmental protections on our public lands, 46.5% of lands in New Mexico – around 36 million acres – are privately owned. These private lands include diverse riparian ecosystems and essential wildlife corridors, and they present exciting opportunities for conservation and restoration.

Last spring, the New Mexico Land Conservancy finalized a 9,000-acre conservation easement on Ute Creek Ranch in Bueyeros on New Mexico's eastern plains. When the owner, Tuda Crews, first began managing the land 25 years ago, she identified just 17 bird species on the property. After years of improving grazing techniques, implementing erosion control structures, removing invasive vegetation, and planting native grasses, Ute Creek regained a perennial flow and the ranch has become an oasis for migratory birds, with more than 100 species of birds present.

In 2021, Ute Creek Ranch received a Leopold Conservation Award from the Sand County Foundation. The new conservation easement ensures that the land will continue to be managed for wildlife over the long term.

Another success story is unfolding this month, as the Nature Conservancy finalizes the purchase of the 50,000-acre Dawson Elk Valley Ranch in Cimarron. Dawson was once a coal mining town of around 10,000 people; Dolores Huerta was born there in 1930. But in the wake of deadly mine explosions, Dawson became a ghost town and eventually a private ranch.



After the Nature Conservancy's purchase is completed, the land will be managed by a coalition of Native nations with ancestral ties to the land. An 18,000-acre conservation easement will be overseen by the nation's first Land Trust Alliance-certified Indigenous land trust.

The landscape ranges from short grass prairie to conifer forests, and includes 18 miles of the Vermejo River. It is home to eight endangered species and 24 threatened species, including swift fox, burrowing owl, prairie dogs, and Rio Grande cutthroat trout, as well as elk, mule deer, turkey, mountain lions and black bears.

AWF has increasingly included projects on private lands in our annual schedule of restoration work because we recognize the important habitat opportunities provided by these lands. Our first weekend-long project, coming up next month, will take place on the 90,000-acre Ft. Union Ranch. We will be partnering with Hermits Peak Watershed Alliance to continue the restoration work of Wolf Creek, which has grown visibly healthier since our first project there 8 years ago.

There are always opportunities to improve the health and resilience of New Mexico's landscapes, no matter the political climate. We hope you'll join us in making the most of them.

Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Secretary

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MARCH 21, 2026 SERVICE PROJECT: Rio Puerco

LOCATION: Rio Puerco near Cuba, NM

THE PROJECT: Join AWF for a day of planting cottonwood and willow poles on State Trust Land along the Rio Puerco south of Cuba, NM!

We are partnering with Rio Grande Return and the State Land Office for this project. Our work will contribute to an ongoing effort by Rio Grande Return to restore around 90 acres of riparian ecosystem. The goals are to reconnect the river with its floodplain, reduce sediment runoff into the Rio Grande, and improve habitat for species like beavers.

SCHEDULE: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 21

GEAR: For this project, you will need work gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. Wear layers as the day may start off cool and warm up later. Please be prepared for wet and/or muddy conditions; you may want to bring a change of shoes.

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

TO SIGN UP: Email Abe at abe@riograndereturn.org

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
- May 29-31.....Shush’Kin Fen, Zuni Mountains
- 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

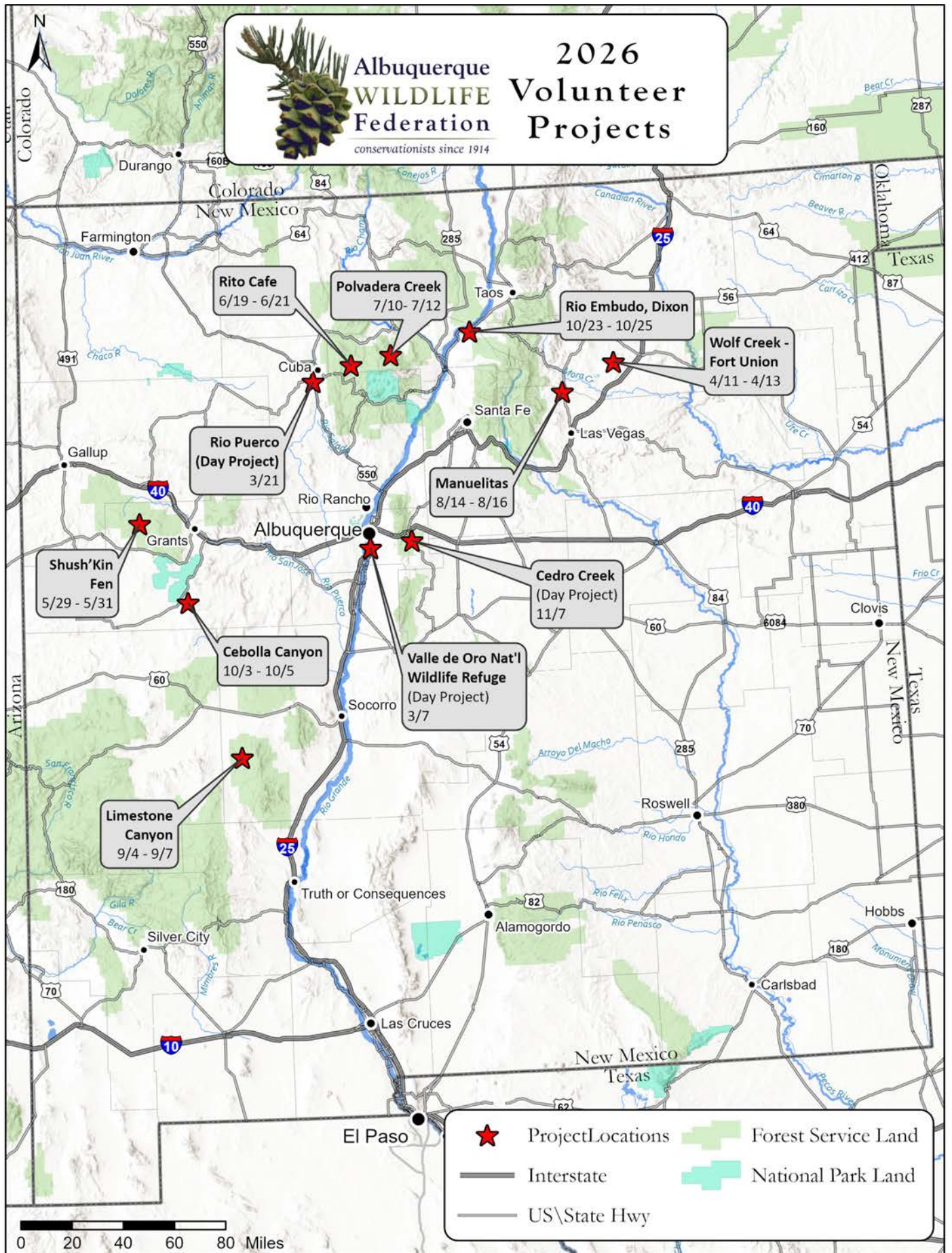
AWF BOARD 2026

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- Bill Zeedyk - Director Emeritus*



UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Caja del Rio Clean-Up Days

EVERY SATURDAY IN MARCH, 9:00 am-12:00 pm

NEW MEXICO WILD

Volunteers will meet at the end of County Rd. 62 and help remove litter and larger dumped items. Participants are welcome to join for any or all

of the five cleanup days — please RSVP! Sign up to participate at: <https://nmwild.org/get-involved/events/>



Stewards of the Southwest Summit

MARCH 3-5, Santa Ana Star Casino Hotel, 54 Jemez Canyon Dam Rd, Santa Ana Pueblo

This event brings together Tribal and Indigenous foresters, practitioners, natural resource managers, emergency departments, NGOs, and state & federal agencies to center the needs, challenges, and successes of Tribal forestry and fire management. For more info and to register: <https://www.stewardsofthesouthwest.org/>

2026 Land and Water Summit

MARCH 4-6, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque

Join us as we explore how to design and build in partnership with nature. This year's theme highlights how we can deepen our engagement with the natural world by incorporating nature-based practices into our work.

For more info and to register: <https://www.landandwatersummitnm.org/>

Film Showing: Crown of the Continent & The Ends of the Earth

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 4:00-6:00 p.m., CCA in Santa Fe, 1050 Old Pecos Trail

SIERRA CLUB

The Sierra Club is presenting two films by AWF friend and volunteer John Grabowska. *Crown of the Continent* is a lyrical journey through Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias wilderness. *The Ends of the Earth: Alaska's Wild Peninsula* profiles the remote Alaska Peninsula, a cloud-cloaked landscape where giant brown bears outnumber people and the sockeye salmon run is the largest in the world. Register at: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar.

Donation of \$10 requested, donate at: riograndesierraclub.org/donate

2026 Spring Wetlands Roundtable

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 9:00 am-4:30 pm, New Mexico State Library in Santa Fe or online

The New Mexico Spring Wetlands Roundtable will be conducted as a hybrid meeting in the Piñon room at the New Mexico State Library located at 1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 and via Microsoft Teams to better reach all potential attendees and communities in New Mexico. For details, including registration, meeting link, and agenda, visit: <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wetlands/wetlands-roundtables/>



Plant Trees with Tree New Mexico

Volunteers plant trees with trained team leaders, so no previous experience is needed. Tree New Mexico provides instructions, tools, maps to the tree planting locations, and basic tree planting guidance. At the location, the hole is dug, the tree to be planted and mulch is nearby, and the resident provides a hose and water.

Please email Mackenzie@treenm.org with any questions or concerns.

See planting schedule and sign up to volunteer at: <https://treenm.org>

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

Thinking Like Water

Tues Feb 24, 2026: Episode 1
Tues Mar 24, 2026: Episode 5
at Indigo Theater, Las Vegas, NM,

Doors Open 5:30pm, Screening Starts 6:00pm, Followed by Q/A with Special Guests
Free ~ Donations Accepted

www.thinkinglikewater.com

a 5-Part Docuseries by Renea Roberts

Part biography, part how-to, "water wizard" Bill Zeedyk and his allies illustrate a proven toolbox of simple, low-tech, low-cost methods to restore degraded lands. Working with nature, rather than against her, to gird against the extremes of drought and flood, while fostering climate resiliency.

The Utton Transboundary Resources Center presents:

Rio Grande Basin in New Mexico

Join the Utton Center for a showing of the "Rio Grande Basin in New Mexico" documentary, followed by a Q&A with interviewees. This documentary follows the Rio Grande from just below the Colorado state line to Elephant Butte Irrigation District and discusses water management in the face of increasing aridification. Panelists will include Martha Cooper, John Fleck, Jorge Garcia, Phil King, Stephanie Russo Baca, and Paul Tashjian.

MARCH 2, 2026
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

UNM SCHOOL OF LAW
ROOM 2401
1117 STANFORD DR NE,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87106

ALSO AVAILABLE REMOTELY

UNM.ZOOM.US/J/92828287975

JOURNEY DOWN THE GILA

Upcoming Screenings

<p>March 17 Doors 6:00 PM Film 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Las Vegas, NM New Mexico Highlands University - Student Union Building Theater</p>
<p>March 18 Doors 6:00 PM Film 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Los Alamos, NM SALA - Los Alamos Event Center</p>
<p>March 19 Doors 6:00 PM Film 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Santa Fe, NM Center for Contemporary Arts</p>
<p>March 20 Doors 6:00 PM Film 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Santa Fe, NM Center for Contemporary Arts</p>

Find tickets at nmwild.org/events

Willow Planting Day

**Rio Puerco
South of Cuba, NM**

Join **Rio Grande Return** in planting willows along the Rio Puerco to stabilize river banks and improve wildlife habitat.



How You Can Participate

- **Volunteer**

Come plant willow and cottonwood poles with us. No prior experience is needed, just your enthusiasm and willingness to make a difference.

- **Learn**

Rio Grande Return is restoring the degraded riverscape using low tech process-based methods like planting riparian vegetation and building structures to improve beaver habitat. This effort will help reconnect the river with the floodplain, reduce sediment into the Rio Grande, and benefit approximately 90 acres of riparian wetland on state trust land.

- **What to Bring**

Lunch, drinking water, work gloves, warm clothing (layers), sturdy shoes or boots, hat and sunscreen.

Event Date

Wednesday
March 11,
2026

10am - 3pm

Location

Meet along Hwy 550. Directions will be provided to those who RSVP Yes.

RSVP 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: \$ _____