



# CONSERVATION VOTERS NEW MEXICO

*Turning Environmental Values into State Priorities*

Volume V, Issue 1 April 2010

## NM State Legislature passes Landmark Conservation Legislation!

Although the 2010 30-day state legislative session was focused heavily on our state budget, CVNM is excited to report that the NM state legislature passed landmark legislation to protect New Mexico's natural heritage. SB186, the Natural Heritage Conservation Act – sponsored by Senator Carlos Cisneros – establishes a fund that will attract federal funds, private donations, and other sources of revenue to fund projects that restore and protect our water quality, forests, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches. The legislation was passed in the early morning hours on the last day of session, and is a tremendous step forward for our Land of Enchantment.

For years, New Mexico has been missing

*CVNM attended the bill signing ceremony with Governor Richardson on the Natural Heritage Protection Act*

out on an opportunity to collect approximately \$20 million annually in federal funds for land and water conservation projects, including grants for easements to protect working farms and ranches.

The 2010 Natural Heritage Conservation Act fills this gap by authorizing the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to utilize funds from various sources for restoration projects or voluntary easements by landowners for protection of our natural heritage.

private lands to protect working farms and ranches, and natural habitats. The easements will allow lands to continue to be used as they are currently, while ensuring that they are a legacy for generations to come.

The funds can also be used to restore wildlife habitats, forests, streams and riparian ecosystems, watersheds and other natural areas. These projects will help restore and protect our stream quality and quantity, and provide recreational opportunities for hiking, bird-watching, hunting, fishing, boating and more. New Mexico's fish, wildlife, and

*(continued on page 4)*

The funding will be available to state, local and tribal entities, with potential participation by private conservation groups that can help manage and maintain the projects. Funded entities can work in cooperation with willing landowners to establish easements on

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

# Executive Director's Message

Dear Conservation Voter,

April 22<sup>nd</sup> marks our nation's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day, and as I count down the days until Earth Day it is clear that while much has been accomplished in 2010 – there is still much to be done in the coming months.

From holding our first ever Conservation Lobby Day to passing critical land conservation legislation, CVNM has been working to ensure that conservation issues are brought to the forefront.

With the 2010 legislative session now behind us, I am excited to report that CVNM defeated 100% of all anti-conservation legislation for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row. We also honored Mark Fesmire, Director of the Oil Conservation Division, at our annual legislative reception – a public servant who has diligently fought to protect our precious drinking water and public health.

In March, two pro-conservation candidates were also re-elected in Santa Fe: Mayor David Coss and City Councilor Chris Calvert. Both of these officials have worked to put strong policies in place that invest in clean energy and green jobs.

We have also been working to compile votes from this past legislative session for our scorecard – to be released around Earth Day. I hope that the scorecard will help YOU hold YOUR lawmakers accountable, and ensure that conservation is a priority for our leaders in 2011.

Finally, as I write this, we have just said goodbye to a legend, Secretary Stewart Udall. Our thoughts are with the Udall family at this time. His vision and crusade for environmental protection will continue to inspire us as we work to protect New Mexico.

Thanks for being a conservation voter.

With gratitude,

  
Sandy Buffett  
CVNM Executive Director



## STAFF

**Sandy Buffett**, Executive Director

**Leanne Leith**, Political Director

**Thomas Lawley**, Business Administrator

**Molly Brook**, Program Associate

CVNM is a nonpartisan, non-profit 501c(4) organization that works to protect New Mexico's natural environment and our cherished way of life by:

- Educating legislators and voters on critical conservation issues;
- Lobbying on behalf of pro-conservation legislation;
- Holding legislators accountable for decisions that impact the environment; and
- Endorsing and electing pro-conservation candidate's to public office.

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# Mark Fesmire honored at 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Reception



*(From Left to Right):*

*Mark Fesmire, Gov. Bill Richardson, and CVNM Executive Director Sandy Buffett*

In January, with the 30-day legislative session in full swing, CVNM held its 4<sup>th</sup> annual legislative reception at the Rio Chama Steakhouse in Santa Fe. It was an evening of great food, excellent company and conversation, and an opportunity to unwind after a long week at the legislative session. Over 175 people attended the event – including state legislators, local elected officials, community leaders

and members. At the event, special guest Governor Bill Richardson spoke about the importance of conservation and environmental efforts. CVNM was also pleased to award Mark Fesmire with the 2010 Conservation Hero award.

The Conservation Hero Award is awarded annually by CVNM to

individuals that demonstrate a strong commitment to the health and protection of New Mexico’s environment, citizens, and wildlife. Fesmire is the Director of New Mexico’s Oil Conservation District. He was chosen to receive this year’s award due to his tireless work protecting New Mexico’s health, wildlife, and drinking water

through the development and implementation of the Pit Rule and groundwater protection compliance.

The Pit Rule was passed by the New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission in 2008. It requires that oil and gas pits have liners to prevent the leaching of toxic chemicals into our ground water.

Fesmire’s work to protect the Land of Enchantment’s precious drinking water demonstrates his unwavering dedication to conserve and protect New Mexico’s critical natural resources.

## Conservation Hero Spotlight:



**Mark Fesmire**

*Mark Fesmire is the Director of the New Mexico State Oil Conservation District. Fesmire has staunchly defended New Mexico’s health, wildlife and drinking water, through the development and implementation of the Pit Rule and groundwater protection compliance.*

*(Right): Governor Bill Richardson addresses legislators, community leaders and CVNM members at the legislative reception*



## Legislature passes landmark legislation (continued from page 1)

habitats support nearly \$1 billion of economic activity in hunting, fishing, and recreation industries. Through critical habitat restoration and protection, SB186 will strengthen and grow our wildlife and outdoor industries – for all New Mexicans.

CVNM applauds the bill's sponsor, Senator Carlos Cisneros and the NM state legislature for voting to protect our natural heritage and support SB186: The Natural Heritage Conservation Act.

## Endorsed Candidates Mayor David Coss and Councilor Chris Calvert Win

In March, Santa Fe held its city council and mayoral elections, and CVNM is excited to announce that two of our endorsed candidates, Mayor David Coss and City Councilor Chris Calvert (District 1), were re-elected!

Mayor David Coss was first elected as Mayor of Santa Fe in 2006, and he then worked to help make Santa Fe the first city to formally adopt the 2030 Architecture Challenge. The Challenge sets timelines for buildings to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Chris Calvert was first elected to the Santa Fe City Council in 2006, and has been an advocate of the city's new green building code. The code, which requires new homes to be 30 percent more energy efficient than standard homes, was sponsored by Councilor Calvert.

## CVNM Holds First Conservation Lobby Day

In February, CVNM hosted our First Annual Conservation Lobby Day in Santa Fe. We were joined by local citizens, organizational and community leaders to ask lawmakers to pass critical conservation priorities.

This year, Lobby Day participants focused on two priority measures – Recovery of Damages to Natural Resources (HB27) and Environmental Board Climate Change Policies (HB78).

Crafted around the “polluter pays” principle, HB27 would have allowed the state Natural Resources Trustee to pursue, within limits, and any entity that damages natural resources without making compensation.

We kicked off Lobby Day with a breakfast advocacy training, where participants learned how to testify. Participants were then given the opportunity to testify at the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing, followed by a tour of the capitol. Over the course of the day, we helped to demonstrate that New Mexicans care about and actively support conservation issues.

We will be holding our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lobby Day in 2011. If you were unable to join us this year, and would like to participate in our 2011 Conservation Lobby Day, please contact Molly Brook at [Molly@cvnm.org](mailto:Molly@cvnm.org).

**To receive our newsletters, event announcements and updates electronically instead of by mail, contact Molly Brook at**

**[Molly@cvnm.org](mailto:Molly@cvnm.org)**

## Special thanks to the sponsors of our 2010 Legislative Reception:

Charmay Allred, Gay Dillingham, Richard and Virginia Ellenberg, Independent Volvo Service, Dr. Leslie LaKind, Law Office of Lopez & Sakura, Bob and Pamela Mang, Karen Mendenhall, John Scanlan, and Victoria Seale

**We would also like to thank Garrett's Desert Inn in Santa Fe for contributing a meeting space for the Environmental Alliance of New Mexico throughout the legislative session! Thank you!**



# ROUNDHOUSE REVIEW

The 2010 New Mexico State Legislative session was a short but successful one for the conservation community. While budget battles dominated much of the session, CVNM defeated all anti-conservation legislation for the sixth consecutive year.

## CVNM worked to defeat anti-conservation bills that would have:

- Perpetuated dangerous myths about wolves and the impacts of the wolf reintroduction program (HJM48),
- Stripped the Water Quality Control Commission of any semblance of balance, putting our precious water resources at risk (SB 131),
- Threatened our communities' groundwater by rescinding the rules governing the disposal of toxic wastes from oil and gas operations (HB192),
- Falsely defined nuclear energy as a clean and renewable energy source, like wind and solar (HJM41, HM53 & SJM38), and
- Aggravated the impacts of unlawful off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on habitat and recreation, by diverting critical funding from enforcement (HJM32, SJM31 & SJM56).

Not only did we successfully defeat all environmental rollbacks, CVNM also helped pass significant conservation legislation, like the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (featured on page 1).

## The Legislature passed several remarkable pro-environment bills that:

- Encourage energy-efficient and sustainable design of schools and other public buildings (SB200 & SB84),
- Urges U.S. Congress to support comprehensive climate and clean energy legislation (HM54),
- Provide protection to public employees who expose unlawful acts by employers (HB 165)
- Promote investment in clean, renewable energy (HB197), and
- Increase the transparency of the legislative process and government operations (SB195, HR1 & HR3)

The conservation community also made significant progress in advancing two pieces of landmark legislation that would have protected New Mexicans from unlawful polluters.

The Private Right of Action (HB259), sponsored by Speaker Ben Lujan, would have made it possible for landowners or other affected citizens to pursue enforcement of environmental laws against violators or agencies that failed to enforce existing law. With this critical tool, citizens would be empowered to protect their land and ground water from potential contamination by a polluting company. After passing out of committee, HB259 was the subject of a lengthy House floor debate, where it ultimately failed to pass by two votes (32-34).

Air Quality Control Permit Denial (HB276), sponsored by Representative Egolf, would have likewise helped protect communities from polluters. This legislation aimed to give the state the authority to deny or revoke a permit for egregious violators of environmental laws – an authority that is already authorized under every other major New Mexico environmental statute. HB276 failed to pass the House floor by an even smaller margin - a single vote (32-33). While neither of these measures passed the full legislature, the fact that they came so close in the New Mexico House of Representatives signals that we are making progress in our efforts to hold polluters accountable and protect our families and communities.

After years of being unable to get critical bills like these out of committee, our champions fought tirelessly to get HB259 and HB276 to the House floor this session, and the fight for environmental justice will continue in 2011.

## KNOW the SCORE!

How did your legislator vote on key environmental bills in 2010? Find Out! Our annual Scorecard will be released later this month.

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## Turning Environmental Values into State Priorities

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YES! I want to support CVNM's efforts to hold legislators accountable for their environmental votes. I want to contribute to this year's production of the CVNM Legislative Scorecard.

Enclosed is my contribution of:

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***Contributions to CVNM support political action on behalf of the environment and therefore are not tax deductible.***

## I WANT TO VOLUNTEER!

I AM WILLING TO: (check all that apply)

- Help at an event
- Host a house party
- Write a letter to the editor
- Contact my legislator
- Be a part of a phone bank
- Go door to door
- Visit legislators at the Capitol