



NEWSLETTER

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544; www.PajaritoEEC.org

Volume 4, Number 1

Winter 2005

President's Message

Michele Altherr

It is official! After five years of building a foundation of support, we will have a space for the first nature center in Los Alamos. The Los Alamos Board of Education voted 4 to 1 in favor of accepting our lease proposal for two rooms in L-wing, one of their unneeded buildings.

Several concerns were expressed. First, PEEC doesn't generate as much income as would be desirable. We replied that we will benefit the schools by initially paying the utility bills, monitoring the property, and offering science education support free of charge. Second, are environmental science topics in the LAPS curriculum and the NM state standards? Yes, they are, and we have provided a link to these documents on our Web site (PajaritoEEC.org) to answer this question. Third, will PEEC have enough volunteers and staff to provide for the rich variety of classes and activities that we proposed? We made it clear that not all programs will be operating on opening day and that it will be a ramping-up process.

We gratefully applaud the Los Alamos School Board, Jim Anderson, and Barbara Lange for being the first to stand up in a substantial way and say yes, a nature center is a good idea for our community.

So when is opening day? We are aiming for a day on or about April 22nd, Earth Day. The nature center will be located at the corner of Orange and Olive Streets, near the high school. The building was initially built as a kindergarten. Yes, it still has the original kid size plumbing, single pane windows, a water-

intensive lawn, and an energy-guzzling heating system, but it is a start!

How will this all play out? It depends upon folks like you! If the idea of establishing our first nature center is exciting to you and it's the reason you've supported us all these years, we hope you'll pitch in and join the fun. Tom Sawyer said, "Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do.... Play consists of whatever a body is *not* obliged to do." Many of us volunteer because it's something we choose to do for fun. You can give in ways that you love by joining one of our focus groups.

1. Programs focuses members' talents on networking and establishing innovative hands-on activities and programs. Currently we are creating the first nature science camp in collaboration with the VCNP, continuing with our third year of the Park Flight Program in the schools, and revving up for a fifth year of community celebrations centered around Earth Day 2005. For Programs contact Becky Shankland (shankland@cybermesa.com);

CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

January 22, cross-country ski outing in Valles Caldera led by Dick and Judy Opsahl

January 29, LAPS District Science Fair

January 31, Program Committee meeting, Mesa Public Library, room 3, 7 p.m.

February 14, board meeting, Hedy Dunn's

February 17, program on Otera Mesa and Valle Vidal, Nathan Newcomer, NM Wilderness Alliance, Mesa Library, 7 p.m.

March ?, talk by Jeanne Fair, "Birds as Environmental Sentinels," location and time TBA

April 22, Earth Day; **April 17-24**, Earth Week

for Earth Day, contact Sarah Meyer (s.j.meyer@earthlink.net).

2. Nature Center focuses members' talents on establishing the nature center facility including exhibits, library, xeriscape garden, and gift shop. Contact Chick Keller (662-7915 or alfanso@cybermesa.com).

3. Business focuses members' talents on structuring our growing non-profit organization and expanding our base of support through marketing strategies. Contact Randy Ryti (rryti@mac.com).

Valles Caldera Summer Day Camp

PEEC is seeking adults and teens who would like to help with the logistical support of a brand new PEEC Summer Day Camp at the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

We have already met with Ray Powell, Executive Director of the VCNP, Bob Parmenter, chief scientist, and Jaime Civitello, archaeologist. They were delighted with the idea and are anxious to pilot the camp with us. This is a one-of-a-kind educational opportunity and we have decided to move forward with the VCNP partnership.

We have generated a fantastic list of interested teachers to teach the camp. Bob Parmenter will take the instructors on a two-day workshop to learn about the VCNP and its resources that can be used to support outdoor science education curriculum units. The teachers will then develop the curriculum. The VCNP and PEEC will use their resources to support the instructors in every way they can. The instructors will use our new nature center facility in Los Alamos as a base and make day trips to the VCNP for outdoor education activities.

Pitch in! Help with organizing the logistics (publicity, registration, transportation, student internships, etc.) and get a little experience working with the Valles Caldera National Preserve! We expect to meet 3 to 5 times over the next six months and do much of the planning via e-mail. Contact Becky Shankland (shankland@cybermesa.com) at or before the January 31 meeting at the library to join the Summer Day Camp team.

Young Biology Students Honored at Banquet

Seven young women from Fannie Sapir's AP biology class at the high school were honored guests at a dinner preceding Dr. Tracey McNamara's community lecture on "West Nile Virus--Lessons Learned?"

The students were Emily Ball, Kayle Brooks, Patricia Langan, Josie Martin, Samantha Slutzky, Gywn Stradling, and Katherine Whitney.

Dr. McNamara was interested in meeting these students; she discussed her work and the students' career plans during the dinner. Also attending were veterinarian Kathleen Ramsay, scientists Jeanne Fair, Babs Marrone, Leonora Midgley, and teacher Fannie Sapir. Fannie wrote in her thank-you that the students had "felt like queens for the night" and had been "inspired to continue on in science and perhaps think about animal pathology."

Those sponsoring the young women's dinners were Julie Pearson, Donna Gemeinhart, Becky and Tom Shankland, Michele Altherr, Linda Hull, Hedy Dunn, and Dick Opsahl.



Samantha Slutzky with Dr. Tracey McNamara

Earth Day Is Coming!

Earth Day is Friday, April 22, and we are planning to coordinate with Russ Gordon's concert at the Community Building that evening. We also want to give L-wing an opening send-off, perhaps with a ribbon-

cutting ceremony and a gee-whiz event for the community.

We have traditionally scheduled events throughout the week (April 17-24), with our major events on Saturday, April 23, this year.

Please join our program committee (Library, January 31, 7 p.m.) and help plan this celebration! Sarah Meyer is heading up the Earth Day planning.

Historic Telephone Lines and the Conservation Movement

[Janie O'Rourke, who spoke on this topic in November, has been studying the function of telephone lines in the Jemez. She has been tracing the remains of historic telephone lines and interviewing people who participated in this project, which grew out of the early conservation movement in the US.]

In 1906 a few men working for the U. S. Forest Service began putting up a telephone line from Española on the Rio Grande westward up into the Jemez Mountains. It was a single ground-return system--that is, it used the ground to complete the circuit. The 9-gage galvanized steel wire was hung from tree to tree on glass insulators. These small blue glass Hemingray No. 9s were screwed to wooden brackets nailed 20 feet high onto the tall straight ponderosa pines growing within the Jemez Forest Reserve. The purpose of the single strand of No. 9 line was to link forest rangers to mountain top lookouts in order to help fight fires in the newly designated Jemez Forest Reserve.

The concept of preserving our nation's forested lands was an idea that had its origins in the American Conservation Movement during the late 1800s. It was a time when most Americans thought of the natural resources in this new and expansive country as an endless commodity. The General Land Office of the Department of the Interior, which had jurisdiction over Federal lands at that time, was primarily interested in selling land--not preserving it. Land could be bought for \$1.25 per acre or acquired essentially free through such laws as the Homestead Act and the Timber Culture Act.

Man's misuse of the land and the dwindling natural resources were all too evident to George Perkins Marsh. An extremely bright child, Marsh remembers

sitting on a little stool between his father's knees in the two-wheeled chaise his father always drove around the family's Vermont property. "To my mind the whole earth spread out before me. My father pointed out the most striking trees as we passed them and told me how to distinguish their varieties. I do not think I ever afterward failed to know one forest tree from another . . . what struck me, perhaps most of all, he stopped his horse on top of a steep hill, bade me notice how the water there flowed in different directions, and told me such a point was called a watershed. I never forgot that word, or any part of my father's talk that day."

In 1864 Marsh published a book, called *Man and Nature*. In the book that marked the beginning of the American Conservation Movement, Marsh describes the deforestation of the Vermont hillsides that had resulted in erosion and the loss of topsoil, increased siltation, the destruction of fish habitats, and the loss of fertility in agricultural fields.

Due in part to the alarm raised by the American Conservation Movement regarding loss of public lands and timber depletion, Congress passed the Creative Act of 1891. This act gave the President of the United States the authority to designate and create reserves from forested public lands. These lands were to be protected and managed in a sustainable way. Six years later Congress passed the Organic Act of 1897, providing for the management and regulation of these reserves by forest rangers.

In 1905 Conservationist Gifford Pinchot was appointed to head what became known as the U.S. Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture. Pinchot made sure that his forest rangers understood that the forest reserves were important because they protected the watersheds of streams used for irrigation, supplied grass and forage for grazing animals, and furnished a permanent supply of wood. "The best way for the Government to promote each of these three great uses is to protect the forest reserves from fire," Pinchot argued.

As Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot came out with a booklet known as the "Use Book of 1905," containing regulations and instructions for permits, grazing, sale of timber, telephone lines, and protection against fire.

He declared that "Arrangements will be made as rapidly as possible to construct telephone lines to connect the Rangers' stations to the lookout stations, so that fires may be

reported expeditiously.”

The year Gifford Pinchot was appointed head of the Forest Service was the same year that the Jemez Forest Reserve was designated. This reserve encompassed the public lands of the Pajarito Plateau westward toward Cuba. The north / south boundaries of the Reserve extended from Gallina Peak on the north to the Cañada de Cochiti Grant on the south. Today's town of Los Alamos is located within and on the east side of what was the Jemez Forest Reserve. And it was the Jemez Forest Reserve that the single strand of No. 9 line was meant to protect.

Ben White--whose family owned a ranch on Los Alamos mesa in 1904 (predating the Los Alamos Ranch School)--worked on the original Forest Reserve telephone line from Española in about 1906 and describes the telephone line's location. “The line came west from Española just south of Santa Clara Canyon to the Stone House Ranger Station. From there it went south past Los Alamos along the western edge of the [current] townsite to what was then the Loomis Ranch [near the northwest corner of the Ramon Vigil Grant]. From here the line turned west to the top of Sawyer Mesa [American Springs], then across the head of Cochiti Canyon and into the Baca Location No.1 [Valles Caldera]. The line continued west and north of the Baca to the Coyote and Blue Bird Ranger Stations. A spur off the main line branched at the head of Cochiti Canyon, going south down Cochiti Canyon to Pines Ranger Station, located south of the Baca.

By 1913 the Forest Service had established four mountain-top lookout stations in the Jemez Forest Reserve--Dead Man's Peak, Chicoma Mountain, Cerro Pelado, and Red Top Mountain. While the phone line connected many of the ranger stations in the Forest Reserve, it wasn't until 1914 that the fire lookouts themselves were put “on line.” The 1914 Jemez National Forest Fire Map showed six mountain-top lookouts connected by spur lines to the main telephone line. The 1914 Fire Map also rated the lookouts as primary or secondary, depending on the views they commanded or in Forest Service lingo--the lookout's “miles of efficiency.”

The earliest lookout points were simply convenient mountain-top locations with good visibility that could be visited by a fire patrolman as he made his rounds of the district on horseback. Sometimes a platform was

mounted in a tree with slats or spikes nailed to the side of a tree to facilitate climbing. A simple alidade and protractor placed on a tree stump was used to determine the precise bearing of a fire. Telephones enabled lookouts to work together using triangulation to locate fires on a fire-finding map. Determining the angles from two lookouts, the fire guards could



Lookout ladder tree built by the CCC at the Upper Crossing in Bandelier, later burned in a forest fire. (photo by Chris Judson)

draw two lines on the fire-finding map whose intersection would pinpoint the fire.

The first permanent lookout cabins were small log structures where the fire guard would

live during the fire season, from May through September. Later lookouts were made from precut timber. Often they were raised above ground with windows all around. During the Depression in the 1930s the CCC built and manned many of these mountain-top lookouts. Despite a far-flung view with a high rating for “miles of efficiency,” at times it must have seemed pretty lonely.



Red Top Mountain lookout cabin, 1932. Mac Fenton visits Fire Guard Jim Curry. (Forest Service archives)

Fire Guard Robin Adair wrote this poem in 1927 about life in the lookout:

The Lookout,

'Way above the forests, that are in my care,
 Watching for the curling smoke--looking
 everywhere.
 Tied to the world below by a telephone,
 High,--and sometimes lonesome--living here
 alone.
 Snow peaks on the skyline, woods and rocky
 ground,
 The green of alpine meadows circle me
 around.
 Waves of Mountain ranges like billows of the
 sea--
 Seems like in the whole wide world there's not
 a soul but me.
 Peering thru the drift smoke, sighting through
 the haze,
 Blinking at the lightning on the stormy days.
 Here to guard the forest from the Red Wolf's
 tongue
 I stay until they take me down, when the fall
 snows come.

Birds as Environmental Sentinels

What are bluebird nesting boxes doing all over Los Alamos open spaces?

If you've asked yourself this question as you hike around our community, you now have a chance to find out the answer at a talk by Jeanne Fair. She is the LANL biologist responsible for using the boxes as a means of measuring environmental health. Curiously, her work also has implications for national security.

PEEC will sponsor her talk in March at a date and location to be announced.

Join the Program Committee

With L-wing as a new location, PEEC wants to ramp up its program offerings. We need a committee of folks who can attend one meeting a month to brainstorm ideas and organize events. The first meeting is Monday, January 31, at 7 p.m., Mesa Public Library.

Currently we are planning these activities:

- ◇ Earth Day/Week--April 17-24
- ◇ VCNP Summer Day Camp
- ◇ monthly talks, hikes, and trips
- ◇ Park Flight bird-banding project
- ◇ wildflower class with Foxx and Hoard
- ◇ planting demonstrations at Pajarito Greenhouse
- ◇ teacher workshops (Projects WET and WILD)
- ◇ art show at Fuller Lodge

Please come to the meeting or contact Becky Shankland (shankland@cybermesa.com).

Science Fair Volunteers Needed January 29

PEEC will be helping the schools with this year's Science Fair on Saturday, January 29, where budding scientists from kindergarten through twelfth grade present their projects.

PEEC members can help with a donation of time. We need two or three members to attend (time to be decided by volunteers). These people will decide which projects will earn a cash award from PEEC in

recognition of outstanding work in environmental science. Five prizes are given totaling \$110: two elementary, two junior, and one senior award. Please come and help make this a memorable experience for students!

Contact Michele Altherr, who will be present during the day helping the schools (maltherr@cybermesa.com). Visit PajaritoEEC.org to see the list of previous PEEC science fair winners.

Protecting Otero Mesa and Valle Vidal

Nathan Newcomer, a grassroots organizer from the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, will speak on "Protecting America's Wildest Grassland: Otero Mesa" on Thursday, February 17, at Mesa Public Library at 7 p.m. His talk is co-sponsored by PEEC and LASE (Los Alamos Sustainable Energy) Network.

Newcomer's talk will include DVD footage of Otero Mesa; he will also discuss the Valle Vidal, another area targeted for oil and gas development. After his talk a speaker from LASE Network will comment on the energy issues at stake.

Olga Schifani Joins PEEC

The PEEC board recently contracted with Olga Schifani to be our first Growth and Development Coordinator.

Olga comes from a family that has lived in New Mexico for over 100 years and that has a tradition of volunteering for charitable endeavors. She has a strong background in environmental education, partnership development, and effective fundraising. She has managed two organic community demonstration gardens and developed curriculum for the Comprehensive Organic Gardening program. She started and ran a small vegan organic farm and transitioned the farm into an education and research organization, where she worked with residential interns and community volunteers.

Olga told us, "I bring you results-oriented fundraising, a successful collaborative and partnering background, and solid, down-to-earth communication skills, as well as a

passion to work with others to make this a healthier world." When asked what we would see on her desk, she said, "A rolodex and a telephone, because people are the foundation of an organization." We are confident that Olga will guide us as we take the next steps in establishing a nature center in Los Alamos.

Thanks to Our New and Renewing Members!

PEEC is grateful to these new and renewing members. Anyone who joined at the \$50, \$100 or above level is entitled to a canvas grocery bag with a PEEC logo. We are behind on delivering them, so please let us know if you're owed this gift that will help you avoid all those dreadful plastic bags at the supermarket! (Contact Becky Shankland at 672-9106 or shankland@cybermesa.com.)

Gale Zander Barlow, Liz Bennett, Ilse and Rainer Bleck, Dave and Faye Brown, Bob Williams and Judy Buckingham, Sue Chasen, Kathy Chilcoat, Dave and Linn Collins, Richard Cooper, Ruth Demuth and Tom Sandford, Jeff and Kandice Favorite, Jill Forman, Leslie Dendy, Lonna Evans, Dave and Anne Fox, Terry Foxx, Bernie and Dawn Foy, Janet Gerwin, Robert and Lori Gibson, Roy Greiner, David Griggs, Sarah and John Gustafson, Leon and Rosalie Heller, Jeri and Phillip Hertzman, Dorothy and Donald Hoard, John and Adele Hopkins, Gary Icopini, Tom and Carlyn Jervis, Mat and Andrea Johansen, Chris Judson, Jonathan Lathrop and Jenny Diesburg-Lathrop, Edwina Lieb and Carl Maggiore, Betty Lilienthal, Betsy and Scott Lucido, Don and Judy Machen, Allison Majure, Michael McKay, Diana, Tim, and Aidan McPherson, Marian Merritt, Gary Resnick and Leonora Midgley, Joel and Ronalie Moss, Don and Cary Neeper, Evan and Diane Noveroske, Dick and Judy Opsahl, Janie and Peter O'Rourke, Bart and Colleen Olinger, Steve Patillo, Julie Pearson, Steve and Peggy Reneau, Randy Ryti and Wendy Swanson, Olga Schifani, Jane Sherwood, Arnie and Chris Sierk, Sharon Stover, Georgia and Gerry Strickfaden, Cathy and Ian Strong, Helene and Jerry Suydam, Stephanie Sydoriak, David and Janice Trujillo, Jeannette and Terry Wallace, Maxine Schmidt and David Watkins, Mike and Kyle Wheeler, Brad and Rozelle Wright, Marilyn Yeamans.

L-wing PEECnic Features Park Flight Program

Our third annual PEECnic on October 23 gave the community a chance to view the L-wing classrooms. Board members provided a festive atmosphere with balloons, posters, and wonderful food. The somber rooms were bursting with the energy of children doing art projects and others wandering around to see Yvonne Keller's lovely PEEC scrapbooks and Terry Foxx's handsome note cards.

Steve Fettig's talk about the science behind the bird-banding project and Ruby Zambraño's slide show of kids, birds, and the banding process were the highlight of the day. Ruby showed a charming photo of a little girl holding a bird and said "Does anyone know her name?" To everyone's delight, a small hand shot up, and a voice said, "It's me!"

President Michele Altherr gave a talk about possible collaborations and uses of L-wing. Hedy Dunn's video of "Winged Migration" fit in with our theme--"It's for the Birds."

At least 50 PEECnickers came to share in the fun, especially the kid-friendly activities that organizer Diana McPherson had arranged to give families a reason to come.

The PEEC board for 2004-2005 was

elected: president, Michele Altherr; vice-president, Randy Ryti; secretary, Sarah Meyer; treasurer, Hedy Dunn; board members Chick Keller, Dick Opsahl, Becky Shankland.

PEEC's New Domain Name

Michele Altherr

We encourage you to visit PEEC's new Web site. We hope the new site will be more dynamic and provide you with helpful information about nature, science education, and the development of the nature center.

The reason for our new domain name--www.PajaritoEEC.org--was (and this may make you chuckle) that www.pecnm.org was frequently blocked for "adult content"!

Currently you can find a calendar of PEEC happenings, a nature guide with a list of the top ten common butterflies, science fair resources, related reading for children and adults, our "wish list," and more. We welcome contributions of great photos and text additions to any of the pages.

A special thank you goes to LASE students Eric Black and Colin McArthur for helping me out of more than a few technical messes.



PEEC Board: Olga Schifani (Growth and Development Director), Chick Keller, Dick Opsahl, Sarah Meyer, Randy Ryti, Hedy Dunn, Michele Altherr, and Becky Shankland.

MEMBERSHIP

If your mailing label says "DUES DUE," it's time to renew your membership. Canvas grocery bags with the PEEC logo are given to new or renewing members at the \$50 level. Return this form and a check to PEEC, P. O. Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544. To give to the Building Fund, make your check to PEEC Building Fund. Membership is valid for one year; PEEC is a 501 (c) 3 tax-deductible organization.

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone number: _____ E-mail address: _____

Membership levels (make checks payable to PEEC):

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate sponsorship | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional donation | \$_____ |

Check the ways you could be involved:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| ____ Develop programs | ____ Support one-time events (Earth Day, talks) |
| ____ Lead educational activities | ____ Help with membership |
| ____ Help with site selection | ____ Raise funds/write grant |
| ____ Give a guest lecture | ____ Edit, write for, or help with newsletter |

PEEC (Pajarito Environmental Education Center)
P. O. Box 547
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FIRST CLASS MAIL