

Waters of the Valle Vidal Protected

The effort to protect the Valle Vidal saw a great victory in December when the State's Water Quality Control Commission voted overwhelmingly (11-1) to designate the waters of the Valle Vidal as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW), thus affording them the highest form of protection under the Clean Water Act.

Amigos Bravos participated in over a year of meetings with state officials to put together the nomination, which Governor Bill Richardson formally proposed in August, calling it a first step in a long fight to protect the Valle Vidal from natural gas drilling. Several state agencies, the Coalition for the Valle Vidal – of which Amigos Bravos is part – and members of the public argued for the ONRW designation during two days of testimony.

The Río Santa Barbara is the only other river system in New Mexico protected by ONRW designation; it was nominated by Amigos Bravos in 2003 and designated by the Water Quality Control Commission in early 2004.

Many individuals from Taos and northern New Mexico gave public testimony during the two days of hearings. The Water Quality Control Commission specifically referred to both the Coalition's technical testimony and the public testimony as key reasons for voting to approve the nomination. The Coalition for the Valle Vidal's technical witnesses included Taylor Streit, a Taos fly-fishing guide who rates the Valle's waters as some of the best fishing waters in the State; Bill Zeedyk, a riparian restoration specialist and long-time leader of restoration efforts in the Valle; Alan Lackey, a founding member of the Coalition for the Valle Vidal and life-long hunter and rancher in Colfax County; Don Hurst with New Mexico Trout; and Bill Schudlich with Trout Unlimited.

The Coalition argued that the Valle Vidal is a unique ecological and economic resource and that streams in the Valle Vidal are a refuge for New Mexico's state fish, the native Río Grande cutthroat trout. Area ranchers and anglers hope restoration efforts encouraged and supported by the designation will help prevent the fish from being listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The Coalition was represented by Western Environmental Law Center during the hearing.

While the designation doesn't prohibit oil and gas drilling outright, it does require that state and federal regulators ensure that water quality is protected. Any entity wanting to drill for gas in the Valle Vidal would have to prove that their activity would not impact water quality. This could make developing the Valle Vidal less attractive or even impossible. The designation also

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Announcing Amigos Bravos 2006 Raffle for the Río

Win An Acre of Land in Beautiful Northern New Mexico

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LANL Needs to Be Accountable for Environmental Cleanup

Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has a sixty-year legacy of dumping radioactive and other toxic waste on the mesas and in the canyons where the facility is located, yet the federal administration has proposed slashing the environmental cleanup budget for the lab.

Amigos Bravos and its partners have documented the presence of radionuclides, perchlorates (residues from high explosives), PCBs, and other toxics in springs below the lab that feed into the Río Grande river, source of drinking and agricultural water for cities and communities downstream, including Santa Fe and several Pueblos. In fact, Los Alamos County closed one of its drinking supply wells because of PCB contamination.

Amigos Bravos has also shown that stormwater runoff is carrying toxins into the waters flowing through canyons below the lab. Sampling has detected PCBs above the human health standard at NPDES (stormwater discharge) outfalls and extremely high levels of PCBs in soils at LANL (as high as 2,464,497 ng/kg while samples taken from other locations in New Mexico are typically not higher than 1500 ng/L).

In late December 2005, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) admitted that the lab was the likely source of chromium detected in the Los Alamos aquifer

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New Mexico Wants to Take Over Discharge Permits Program

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is in the process of obtaining state control – called primacy – over the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program for New Mexico. The program, which deals with discharge permits, is currently administered by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Amigos Bravos is one of two environmental representatives on the NMED-organized working group, which has been meeting for about a year to discuss the state's effort to gain control of the system that eliminates and controls discharges into New Mexico's rivers, streams and lakes. Other members of the working group include representatives from various New Mexico interest groups, such as the dairy, construction, and agricultural industries.

The NPDES program is a key component of Clean Water Act protections. Under the Clean Water Act, all *point source discharges** of pollution require a permit. Anyone who discharges pollutants without a permit breaks the law. NPDES permits set effluent limits, or water quality limits, which limit the amount and concentration of pollution discharged into a water body.

Amigos Bravos has identified a number of concerns about New Mexico gaining primacy over the NPDES program. First of all, the state plans to divide the program among three different state agencies – the Surface Water Quality Bureau, the Mining and Minerals Division, and the Oil Conservation Division. The program is complicated and critically important for protecting clean water in New Mexico and Amigos Bravos is concerned that dividing the program will dilute it. We are also worried that under state control some critical Endangered Species Act

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Help Protect the Red River Watershed

This is the second year of Amigos Bravos' project to protect and restore the Upper Red River Watershed from the devastating impacts of illegal off-road vehicles (ORVs). We have three volunteer work weekends planned for the spring and summer of 2006.

1. June 16 - 18 – We will be working in the Upper Bitter Creek drainage to finish a riparian enclosure that was started last year and to further close off an illegal road into the Valle Vidal.
2. August 4 - 6 – We will be installing a gate to help the Forest Service enforce a seasonal wildlife closure of a system of roads in the lower Bitter Creek drainage.
3. September 22- 24 – We are still identifying a project for this weekend. Keep an eye out for more information closer to the date!

Amigos Bravos initiated this project, which receives funding under the state administered 319 program, because many stretches of the Upper Red River are not meeting water quality standards. Turbidity and stream bottom deposits, caused by excessive erosion and disturbance in the watershed, are listed as two of the most prevalent contaminant problems. The New Mexico State Environment Department reports that these water quality problems are impacting fish populations in the watershed. Studies have shown that irresponsible motorized use of our public lands causes degradation of plant and wildlife habitat, erosion of soils, reduction of plant populations and plant diversity, water and air pollution, damage to cultural resources, and interference with other forms of recreation. Wildlife populations are especially sensitive and can experience increased mortality, changed behavior, and reductions in diversity from irresponsible motorized use of our public lands.

The work weekends typically start on Friday evening with dinner and camping out near the work site. Saturday is the big workday. Sunday is for cleaning up and for hiking and exploring in the area. If a whole weekend is too much for folks, we always welcome people to come and help out for a couple of hours or the whole day on Saturday. *



Scooby and Scout supervise Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, Western Environmental Law Center, and volunteers Lauren Kawas and Ethan Timm adding rocks to the French drain

Amigos Bravos Prepares for Youth Water Symposium

The Amigos Bravos Youth Water Symposium, coordinated by Albuquerque Projects Director Lucy Sanchez, will take place on Thursday, April 27th from 8:30am to 3pm at the **Bosque School**. The school is located at 4000 Learning Road NW, near the intersection of Coors and Montañño, next to the *Río Grande*. This exciting event will provide an opportunity for youth in the South Valley and other largely low-income and Hispanic communities to engage in leadership activities on important water-related issues.

The Symposium will be based on student-conceived, implemented, and presented projects, with a key result being the creation of a proposal for public policy change, at the local or state level, by the end of the day. Executive Director Brian Shields will facilitate the final proposal-generating session with the students, encouraging them to shape a vision based on what they learned from their projects that can realistically be brought to bear in the world.

Middle school-age and high school students from each of four schools will participate in the Symposium. Bosque School seventh and eighth graders will make presentations on their own water quality monitoring of the *Río Grande* where it flows nearby the school. Students from grades 9-12 will serve as audience to the presentations and will participate in discussions, as well as providing help with various conference tasks. A representative from the school, Dan Shaw, is coordinating teachers Kim Lester, Cathy Bailey, Tom Allen, and Mari Bauman, who will be on hand to offer adult leadership and break-time activities for Symposium participants.

South Valley Academy students in grades 8-12 who are in Jennifer Gable's science classes will produce and discuss an earth science project. Nine students from Rio Grande High School, also located in the South Valley, will make a multimedia presentation using stories and poetry to honor the *Río Grande*, under the guidance of teacher John Wright. Students from grades 9-12 at La Academia de Esperanza, a charter school located on the west side of Albuquerque, will provide a presentation from a literary arts perspective.

Sanchez, explains, "It is the intention of Amigos Bravos that the Youth Water

Symposium become an annual event. We hope students will be inspired by the diverse individual and cultural relationships that exist between themselves and the *Río Grande*. We also look to provide an opportunity for creative expression and exchange among South Valley youth in regard to the search for sustainable solutions to water quantity and quality issues currently facing New Mexico. Finally, we look forward to engendering an enthusiastic awareness among South Valley youth that the *Río Grande* is *their* river to care for, to learn from, and to enjoy."

The Amigos Bravos Youth Symposium falls under the third goal of the Amigos Bravos Strategic Plan: *Build a Rivers Movement for the Future*. In addition to organizing the Youth Symposium, Amigos Bravos will be providing lunch and snacks for students, as well as water-bottles with the Amigos Bravos insignia, to serve as useful reminders of the day.

The Amigos Bravos Youth Symposium is open to the public. Please call the Albuquerque office (505-452-9387) for information and to reserve a space. *

Amigos Bravos Opposes Widespread Chemical Use in Our National Forests

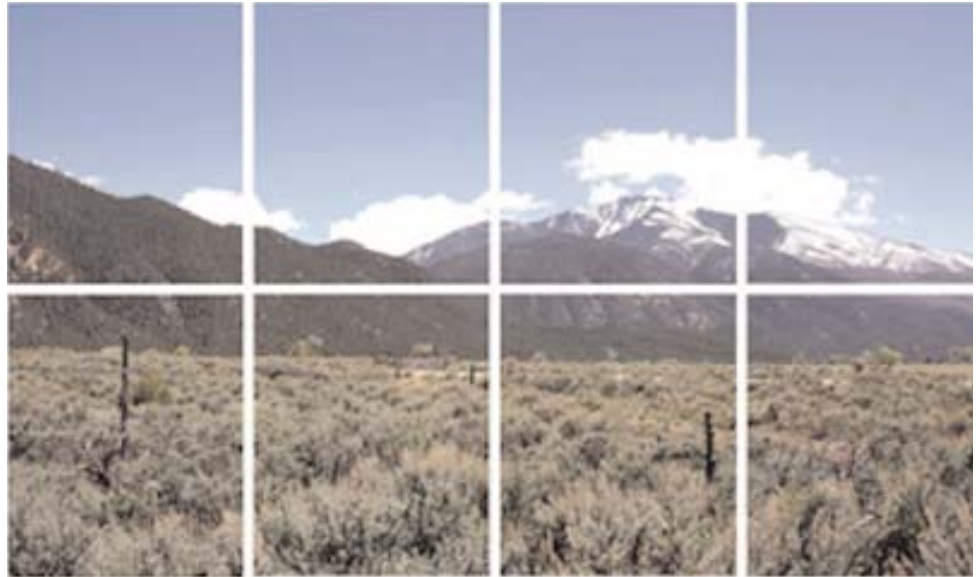
In January, Amigos Bravos joined many individuals and groups in northern New Mexico to appeal a Forest Service decision to spray pesticides over thousands of acres of the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests. On September 12, 2005, the Forest Service signed a Record of Decision paving the way for over 3 million acres of the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests – including wilderness areas, inventoried roadless areas, wild and scenic rivers, research natural areas, and endangered species habitat – to be sprayed repeatedly with any one of eleven herbicides. It was this decision that the diverse collection of groups came together to appeal.

Amigos Bravos joined this appeal because we believe that the cultural and ecological survival of the communities of New Mexico is intricately tied to clean water and healthy rivers. We strongly support controlling weeds in a safe, non-toxic manner to protect both biodiversity and our water resources. We believe that the decision by the Forest Service jeopardizes the headwaters of the watersheds that we depend upon for clean water to irrigate our crops, provide habitat for aquatic life, and recreation for our communities.

Amigos Bravos and the other groups are advocating a credible citizens alternative that stresses prevention rather than after-the-fact chemical treatment and that establishes protections for riparian areas. While Amigos Bravos doesn't oppose the use of chemicals in every situation, we do have a high standard that must be met before we support chemical controls. This high standard includes ensuring that all components in the chemical compound are known and have been studied, the application is absolutely necessary to protect biodiversity, and it has been proven that there is no viable alternative. We do not believe that the Forest Service's decision meets this high standard. *

Amigos Bravos 2006 Raffle for the Río ***Win An Acre of Land in Beautiful Northern New Mexico***

Despite horrific attacks on the environment taking place under the current administration in Washington, Amigos Bravos is successfully leading efforts to permanently protect the Valle Vidal, establish water quality standards which will supercede federal protective statutes, and organize farmers in the South Valley of Albuquerque to reestablish *acequia* associations and protect water quality in that community. Amigos Bravos continues to document Molycorp mine's failure to control toxic



discharges and seepage from mining operations impacting the health of community drinking water and the Red River, while successfully monitoring and documenting Los Alamos National Laboratory's sixty-year legacy of toxic and radionuclide dumping and storage, with a plan in place to hold LANL accountable.

With the support of members just like you, we are making historic strides towards restoring New Mexico's rivers and protecting our precious and shared water resources.

Now, we've got another win-win proposition to offer.

For \$25, this acre of land could soon be yours. Located north of Taos at the edge of the sun- and snow-splashed Sangre de Cristos, where sagebrush meets piñon, north of Taos, you'll enjoy access to the *Río Grande* snaking its way through the stunning river gorge to the west, the Latir Wilderness to the east, Cabresto Canyon to the south, and the Colorado border twenty miles north. At the same time, your purchase of a single ticket for \$25 or, better yet, a packet of five tickets for \$100, will help make our single biggest annual fundraiser a terrific success.

Fill out the form on this page and return it to the Amigos Bravos office, P.O. Box 238, Taos, NM 87571, or call in your purchase with a credit card or debit card to: 505-758-3874.

Drawing date: May 24, 2006, on the air at KTAO radio, 101.9 *

Yes! I want to win an acre of land in beautiful northern New Mexico

Please send me _____ raffle tickets @ \$25.00 each

Please send 5 tickets @ the special price of \$100.00

Enclosed is my check for _____.

Charge my credit card: VISA MC

_____ exp. _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Make checks payable to Amigos Bravos.

Mail to: Amigos Bravos, Box 238, Taos, NM 87571

Calendar of Events:

- March 22 (Wednesday)** **World Water Day**, http://www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations/index.shtml.
- April 1 (Saturday)** **Riparian and Wet Meadows Restoration along Cedro Creek Workshop #1**, with Bill Zeedyk, sponsored by The Quivira Coalition and Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, www.quiviracoalition.org
- April 22 (Saturday)** **Riparian and Wet Meadows Restoration along Cedro Creek Workshop #2**, www.quiviracoalition.org
- April 27 (Thursday)** **Youth Water Symposium, Albuquerque**. An opportunity for high-school youth in the South Valley and other largely low-income and Hispanic communities to engage in leadership activities on important water-related issues.
- May 24 (Wednesday)** **Amigos Bravos 11th Annual Raffle for the Río Drawing**

Amigos Bravos' Cash Reserve Fund was opened in March 1998 with a \$15,000 grant from the Ruth Mott Fund. Thanks to generous donations from Charmay B Allred, Rudolfo & Patricia Anaya, Ann G. Ash, Ezra Bayles, Jean Bergeron, Larry Bernard, John Blancy, Bolene Charitable Trust, Jay Bush and Peggy Rudberg, Doris Channell, Cid's Food Market, John Clem, Dr. Karen Cohen and Robert Templeton, Virginia & William Cowles, Alice Dadian & Richard Bowditch, James Davidson, Marjorie F. Day, Robert & Clarice Day, Martha Dick, The Dobson House, Patrick Dunbar Antiques, Paul & Dawn Fleischer, Leo & Judy Follmar, Lisa Fox, Elizabeth Fuller, Percyne Gardner & Kim Kirkpatrick, Arifa Goodman, Lumina Greenway, Marian Gurewitz, William & Linda Hardy, Harriett & Wendell Harris, Madeleine Herrmann, Jon Hickerson Mark Holland, Hirschi Investments, Douglas Jones, Llewellyn & Jean Jones, Anna Katherine, Barbara Kohl, Diane Konechney, Robert Lagasse, Douglas Large, Leroy & Shelby Leonard, Thomas Lincoln, Annette Lippincott & John Clark, Mario Manzo, Victor & Patricia Marsh, William & Mary Jane McCafferty, Carey Moore, Pat Munoz & Dorcas Adkins, Robert & Shirley Myers, Dwaine & Barbara Nelson, Claiborne & John O'Connor, Barbara Pearlman, Jeanell Pelsor, Jo Dell & Stanton Reed, Bill Reeves, Allen & Mary Anne Sanborn, Merry & John Schroeder, Jessica Schwarzenbach, William & Dudley Slade, Walter Sondheim, Ruth & William Stamm, Canon Stevens, Richard Stibolt & Catherine Kingston, Ann Sudlow, Jacqueline Swap, Douglas & Jane Swift, Kenneth & Janet Taht, John Tapertek, Walter Teilmann, OGwen & Mike Tennison, Raymond Trompler & Helen Zagona, Deb Ungar, Meil & Emily Uptegrove, Mary Utsinger, Suzie Verkamp, Patti & Mark Veteto, Keith Woloshon & Katherine Nydes, Catherine Wright, and Ann & Chris Wyndham, we have added \$15,958 to the interest bearing account. Our goal is to have \$150,000 in the account by the end of 2007. Please consider making a contribution to the Cash Reserve Fund. *

Where There's a Will, There's a Way



*By including Amigos Bravos in your will...
...you could protect a river for years*

CONFIDENTIAL REPLY

To explore a bequest to Amigos Bravos, please complete this form and return it, marked confidential, to Brian Shields, Executive Director, Amigos Bravos.

- I have included Amigos Bravos in my will.
 Please send information on how to include Amigos Bravos in my will.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Telephone _____ Best time to call _____

Help us save the Río Grande Join Amigos Bravos!

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Introductory | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 River Advocate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 River Protector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 River Steward | <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Business Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 River Advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 River Guardian |

- I want to make a donation to the **Amigos Bravos Cash Reserve Fund**

Amigos Bravos is a 501 (c)(3) organization.
Your membership donation is fully tax-deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

- Charge my credit card: VISA MasterCard

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Mail to: **Amigos Bravos, P.O. Box 238, Taos, NM 87571**

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Water as part of the Commons – Defining the “Public Welfare”

The saying “*agua es vida*” (water is life) succinctly expresses the primary importance of water to the residents of the arid southwest. Water is inseparable from life, and a person’s access to clean water is essential for survival. To this day, the Native American communities recognize that water is a common resource – not a commodity – and the traditional *acequia* farming communities make a point of sharing water equitably among the *parciantes*. Moreover, with the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, the U.S. Congress recognized that access to clean water is a basic human right, not simply a privilege. Despite this historic wisdom, and in a move that negates the essence of nature, water throughout the U.S. has become a commodity – flowing uphill to money.

The commodification of water is morally and environmentally unsound.

The waters of New Mexico are technically owned by the State. However, the State has over-allocated its water resources and the monetary value of a water right is increasing daily. Consequently the water market is taking water from more impoverished rural communities and transferring it to richer municipal and industrial users, thus threatening to dry up our valuable farmlands, while making communities downstream increasingly dependant on treated wastewater.

Over the years, Amigos Bravos has struggled with the question of how to

counter the forces of the “market” in order to guarantee a person’s – and a river’s – right to clean water. We commissioned a paper by John R. Brown ([Understanding and Responding to the Commodification of Water](#)) that can be found on our web page. We have also participated in national and international conferences dealing with the privatization of water.

Most recently, we have been engaged in an ongoing effort to develop tools that will counter the market-driven approach to decision making regarding water transfers in New Mexico. Our colleagues in this effort (known as the New Mexico Water Network) include New Mexico Environmental Law Center, New Mexico Acequia Association, Western Environmental Law Center, 1,000 Friends of New Mexico, SouthWest Organizing Project, American Friends Service Committee, and New Mexico Legal Services.

In New Mexico, the State Engineer has to evaluate the impacts of all water transfer applications on three criteria: impairment of other water rights, conservation of water, and the public welfare. Historically, the State Engineer has attempted to minimize the concept of public welfare and narrow its application to solely addressing interstate compact obligations. However, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) has mandated the preparation of Regional Water Plans throughout the state that must include defining the public welfare for each region. The State Engineer has further stated that once the regional water plan for an area has been approved by the ISC, he/she will take into consideration the applicable public welfare statement in water transfer decisions affecting that region. Herein lies the most effective, yet untried, tool for countering the wholesale flow of water to the most wealthy. By defining the public welfare, each region has the opportunity to clearly state the values by which it wants its water to be managed.

In the effort to develop a model public welfare statement that can be implemented and enforced, Amigos Bravos is an active member of the Steering Committee for the development of the Taos Regional Water Plan. Through a number of meetings, the Public Welfare Committee of the Taos Regional Water Plan has developed draft criteria and an implementation plan aimed at giving the local community review authority over proposed water transfers. The proposal we are putting forth has the exciting possibility of reestablishing values that are consistent with treating water as a part of the commons.

As soon as the Steering Committee approves the draft public Welfare Statement and Implementation program we will post it on the Amigos Bravos web page. Meanwhile for more information, or to become involved in this effort, please stay tuned or call us at 505-758-3874. *

Farewell to Conservationist and Amigos Bravos Supporter Dr. James Vernon Lewis

Dr. James Vernon Lewis, retired University of New Mexico professor of Mathematic and longtime Amigos Bravos member, passed away on November 25, 2005. Following his retirement from UNM in the early 1980s, Dr. Lewis became devoted to teaching natural gardening and helped to establish a system of bike trails throughout Albuquerque. Returning to UNM, he earned a masters degree at the School of Architecture and Planning. He was a well known pioneer of xeriscaping at a time when Albuquerque had not yet recognized the necessity for water conservation. He was also an early proponent of the use of native plants in the landscape. In accordance with his wishes, Professor Lewis asked that any memorial contributions benefit the Landscape Architecture Program at the School of Architecture and Planning. Please make gifts payable to the UNM Foundation, MSC 07 4260, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131 and indicate that the gift is in memory of James Vernon Lewis. You may call Jan Bandrofchak, Development Officer at the School of Architecture & Planning, at 505-277-6442 with any questions.*

LANL Needs to Be Accountable

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levels 4 times federal standards and 8 times state standards. The chromium was detected at a monitoring well in Mortandad Canyon, which LANL has used as a discharge for treated radioactive waste since 1963. The detected chromium is within 1 mile of a drinking water supply well. Exposure to chromium can cause liver, kidney and nerve damage. The lab detected the chromium in late 2004, but took a year to release the results, which appeared shortly after the University of California was awarded a new 7-year contract to manage the lab.

In early February this year, the New Mexico Environment Department issued a fish advisory for Abiquiu and Cochiti reservoirs and sections of the Río Grande river between Otowi and Pojoaque Creek. This marks the first time an advisory has been issued for the river. The reason for the advisory was detection of PCBs. LANL admitted that the lab is a likely source of PCBs detected downstream from the lab; reasons for upstream detection are unclear, but mobile fish populations is a possible explanation. PCBs are a cancer-causing chemical, banned by the federal government in 1976. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) made the original detections in the reservoirs two years ago; NMED said the delay in declaring the fish advisories was because of lack of funding to do follow-up testing.

Despite a wide range of documented pollution from legacy waste sites and current operations, the proposed FY2007 budget for LANL cuts funding for environmental cleanup by 36%. While the lab's overall budget is proposed to increase to \$2.2 billion in FY2007, funding for defense environmental cleanup is cut from \$141 million to \$90 million.

Under pressure from Amigos Bravos and our coalition, LANL has investigated around 300 of its approximately 3000 solid waste sites and concluded that some of them are leaking or have the potential to leak into groundwater. A critical issue is that LANL does not adequately monitor its contaminated sites, situating monitors so far downstream that it is impossible to identify the source of contaminants. The lab also does a poor job of controlling erosion, which releases contaminants during stormwater events.

A number of water bodies located entirely or partially on LANL property exhibit water quality problems from their headwaters downstream. Based on NMED testing, impairments include Gross Alpha, Selenium, Mercury, and PCBs. The areas include: Pueblo Canyon, Los Alamos Canyon, Guaje Canyon, Mortandad Canyon, Pajarito Canyon, and Sandia Canyon. With the exception of Sandia Canyon, which supports livestock watering, designated uses for livestock watering and wildlife habitat are not supported by any of these waters.

However, two Pajarito Plateau tributaries to the Río Grande that do not cross LANL property show no impairments for water quality from any of the sources for the other areas listed above and both support wildlife habitat designation (livestock designation has not been evaluated). These are the Rito de los Frijoles and Capulin Creek.

LANL is currently under a Consent Order with the state of New Mexico to investigate and cleanup its pollution by 2015. Sampling undertaken by Amigos Bravos and its partners, recent reports from the New Mexico Environment Department, and the recent reports of chromium and PCB pollution attributable to the lab, have raised concern that toxic and radionuclide pollution at LANL are creating impacts the lab is not controlling or monitoring adequately. Amigos Bravos is working with consultants to investigate violations of the Clean Water Act and we will release a report on potential violations early in 2006.

Confronting LANL with both its legacy of toxic dumping and inadequacies with its current monitoring and remediation efforts is complicated by several facts:

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Waters Protected

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activity would not impact water quality. This could make developing the Valle Vidal less attractive or even impossible. The designation also allows the state to require stricter regulations on oil and gas development if drilling were approved.

Thank you to all of our members who wrote comments in support of the nomination, testified at the hearings, and supported this effort. We couldn't have done it without you! *

Discharge Permits Program

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review of permits will be lost. On the other hand, EPA Region 6, which is now in control of the program, is based in Dallas and it is difficult to have access to permit writers and enforcement staff. If the program were based in New Mexico it would be easier for citizens to be more involved in permit development and enforcement.

Amigos Bravos will continue to participate in the working group and will push for what is best for New Mexico rivers. We will keep you posted about this process.

NMED has written draft NPDES regulations and legislation, all of which can be viewed online at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/NPDES/CurrentDrafts.html>.

Please contact Rachel Conn at rconn@amigosbravos.org or 758.3874 if you have questions or opinions about NM gaining primacy over the NPDES discharge permit program.

** A point source is any discernable, confined, and discrete conveyance of pollutants to a water body. Generally this means that if a discharge is coming out of a pipe, ditch, or channel it is called a point source. A point source can also be a discrete fissure, concentrated animal feeding operation, land-fill leachate collection system, or a vessel or other floating craft from which pollutants are discharged. **



*Friends of
the Wild
Rivers*

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LANL Needs to Be Accountable for Environmental Cleanup

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LANL has always operated as almost a law unto itself; the lab contends that any waste containing radioactive materials is outside the scope of the Clean Water Act; the lab has a budget of \$2.2 billion dollars (proposed FY2007); it is by far the largest employer in the poorest region of the state; and national security concerns are used to impede environmental cleanup efforts.

There are several ground and surface water permits coming up, some for the first time in the lab's history. One is a NM Environment Department draft ground water discharge permit for LANL's Radioactive Liquid Waste Disposal Area at TA-50 (the location where all of the Lab's radioactive liquid waste gets processed). Amigos Bravos' effort here will be fourfold: to ensure that no additional pollutants are discharged, to advocate for clean up of historic spills, to use the permitting processes as a way to educate and mobilize the public around the legacy of LANL's dumping; and to use the process as a way to elicit more information from LANL, get this information into the record, and continue to press for independent analyses of all relevant issues.

Given the lab's budget, its regulatory isolation, and its proven ability to withhold information and manipulate analyses, the fight to hold the lab accountable and protect the Río Grande watershed will be protracted and difficult.

Don't New Mexican's deserve better? *

Olivia & Poetry

Olivia, the puppet otter who lives at the Amigos Bravos office, has been invited to participate in a SOMOS poetry-writing workshop for children, in honor of National Poetry Month, at the TAOS PUBLIC LIBRARY in April. Olivia will no doubt inspire many poems. She'll be assisted by Joanne Forman, the composer of the musical about the return of river otters to New Mexico: OTTERS FOREVER!

Watch the newspapers and listen to the radio in April for details. *