

Environmental Alliance of New Mexico 2008 Legislative Priorities

The Environmental Alliance of New Mexico (EANM) is an informal coalition of environmental organizations working collaboratively to further conservation issues at the New Mexico State Legislature. The mission of EANM is to pass strong environmental legislation and to defend against attempted environmental rollbacks. The EANM has identified a number of priorities for the 2008 legislative session, which are summarized here:

The **“Leave No Child Inside Act”** will generate revenue for an outdoor educational programming fund through a 1% excise tax (a “sin” tax) on the purchase of new televisions and video games. The fund will be administered through the Public Education Department to programs that will address unhealthy trends in New Mexico youth associated with television, movie and video game exposure, including obesity and poor school performance. It is documented that the average American child now spends more time watching television than in school.

Amendments to the “Efficient Use of Energy Act” (aka, the “Ratepayers Protection Act”) will require regulated electric utilities to meet 10% of their energy demand with energy efficiency by 2020 instead of building new power plants (which are more expensive than efficiency) and will also encourage the NM Public Regulation Commission to allow energy efficiency programs to be as profitable to New Mexico utilities as power plants are. Studies show that the potential exists in New Mexico to become 33% more energy efficient across all sectors of the economy, including at least 10% from the utility sector. By doing so it is estimated that 6,900 new jobs will be created in such areas as weatherizing homes and designing high-performance energy management systems. New Mexico utility companies currently have little profit incentive to increase customer efficiency rather than build new power plants. This legislation will reduce pollution and carbon dioxide emissions, save consumers money in the long term, and improve the economic productivity and quality of life in New Mexico.

The 2% Solution, or **“Smart Investments in Public Buildings”** policy, will ensure a 50% energy saving throughout the life of new and retrofitted public buildings through a 1-2% initial investment in the “sustainable” or “green” design of each public building. Initial construction costs represent only 20 - 30% of a building’s entire costs over its 30 – 40 year life span. This legislation will provide a long-term investment in energy cost savings for public buildings afforded through the State’s Capital Infrastructure Improvement Plan.

A one-time funding request of **\$10 million for Statewide Ecosystem Restoration Funding** will facilitate efforts to restore New Mexico’s fragile and iconic river ecosystems, including funding for water flows, technical studies and community outreach. New Mexico lags behind other western states’ efforts to protect and restore river ecosystems and flows whether comparing laws, regulations, policies, staffing levels, and core agency missions. Healthy flowing rivers benefit New Mexico communities by protecting our water quality, water supply, cultural heritage, and natural heritage.

Organizations active in EANM include: *1000 Friends of NM, Animal Protection Voters, Amigos Bravos, Audubon NM, Conservation Voters NM, Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environment New Mexico, Dooda Desert Rock, NM Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy, NM Environmental Law Center, NM Wilderness Alliance, NM Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, and the World Wildlife Fund.*

For further information or to participate in the Environmental Alliance of New Mexico, please contact Javier Benavidez at 505-315-3596.