



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Volume 68, Number 3

July 2015

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Calendar

July 21 Lunch with a Leader, Sanders Moore, Mesa Public Library, 11:40

August 27 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

September 17 Emile Nakhleh, Fuller Lodge, 7p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)

Lunch with a Leader July 21, Sanders Moore

In July Sanders Moore, the State Director for Environment New Mexico, will be our speaker. Environment New Mexico works to protect air, water, and open spaces in the state. Prior to joining ENM in 2010, Moore worked at the Georgia Conservancy on improving air quality in the metro-Atlanta area through education and advocacy. She received her Master's degree in Environmental Law & Policy from Vermont Law School and her B.A. from Wesleyan University.

In August we will not have Lunch with a Leader. We hope to resume in September, but right now we are awaiting installation of new software at the library that will be used to assign room reservations in the coming year. Ah, the joys of the 21st century computer world!

As always, League members will get a call or an e-mail about the date, place, and speaker. That information will also be on the LA Daily Post and in the Monitor.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Board 2015-2016

President, Barbara Calef
1st Vice President, Wendee Brunish
2nd Vice President, Rebecca Shankland
Secretary, Julie Williams-Hill
Treasurer, Rosmarie Frederickson, Kathleen Taylor
Directors:
Reservations, Amy Birnbaum
Lunch with a Leader, Karyl Ann Armbruster
Membership, Tarin Nix
Director-at-Large, Anne Nobile
Voter Services, Lynn Jones
Off-Board Directors:
Arrangements, Mary van Eeckout
Budget, Kathleen Taylor
Fundraising, Unfilled
Newsletter, Kathleen Taylor

Report of June LWL: Jeremy Marshall

The Southwest Jemez Mountains Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (Southwest Jemez CFLRP) is one of 23 projects of its kind approved by Congress in 2009. The project covers the upper Jemez River watershed, an area of 210,000 acres, including the entire Valles Caldera National Preserve, part of the Santa Fe National Forest, and parcels of state, private, and tribal lands.

Jeremy Marshall, the Implementation Leader, explained that the goal of the project is to create a healthier landscape by thinning the forest and improving watershed conditions. The team also endeavors to protect cultural resources, improve wildlife habitat, and create local economic development opportunities.

In the Jemez Mountains there are about 10,000 lightning strikes a year. Most of the strikes do not ignite fires, but when they do, the team must decide whether to suppress or manage the fire. Marshall noted that June fires are usually suppressed because of dry conditions. Even this

year, when four inches of rain fell in the Valles Caldera in May, there was still a deficit in June.

In five years the team has succeeded in treating 47,665 acres, or 24% of the total area. They have managed “beneficial” wildfire on 23,934 acres and prescribed fire on 9,947 acres. They have thinned the trees around 800 archaeological sites and performed mechanical thinning on 5,757 acres.

Fifteen to sixteen people work full time on the project. In addition, fire crews and other workers are hired for temporary work. The mechanical thinning is performed in partnership with Walatowa Timber Industries, which operates a mill in Jemez Pueblo and employs about twenty people. The mill produces vigas and dog beds as well as wood chips.

Other work performed so far includes watershed restoration for 27 miles of streams, and riparian restoration with assistance from the WildEarth Guardians, decommissioning 48 miles of roads, and treating 306 acres for noxious weeds.

The team works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure appropriate mitigation for endangered species, including the Mexican spotted owl, Jemez Mountain salamander, and the NM jumping mouse. Marshall remarked that the salamander likes big logs, but not much else is known about it. The project area includes about 2300 acres of critical habitat.

Funding for the project is assured through 2019. A coordinator is seeking funding from potential partners such as the Nature Conservancy. Often money appropriated for restoration is re-directed to fight wildfires, which are far more expensive than preventive action.

Barbara Calef

Sustainability Position Revised

In the mid-nineties many members of the Los Alamos League dedicated months of their lives to developing our sustainability position. The concepts are essential to our activities. However, the philosophical tone of the text was not amenable to use for advocacy. Therefore, at its July 9 meeting, the board adopted the following revised version to emphasize the need for action.

SUSTAINABILITY (Adopted 1995; Revised 1997, 2004, 2008, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos endorses the concept of a sustainable society as a preamble for all of its current and new positions. We define a sustainable society as one that satisfies its own needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations. We aspire to make our society more sustainable by preserving and respecting its interdependence with the natural world. A sustainable society protects nature. Our society should offer all individuals a clean environment including pure water, unpolluted air, and sufficient sources of renewable energy to provide for their physical needs. Our society should distribute scarce resources equitably so that conflicts over them are minimized. Every working person should be paid a living wage.

July Observer Corps Report

At the June 9 County Council meeting, the County Council raised the recycling and solid waste fees. This raise is needed to cover increased costs and to offset reduced income from environmental taxes. A contributing factor to the increase in cost is the need to capture methane gas being released from the former Los Alamos landfill. In addition, hauling and tipping fees for waste and recycling have increased at the Bernalillo County facilities.

At the June 16th County Council meeting, the Council had an extended discussion about the process for updating the county's Comprehensive Plan. The county adopted a complete Comprehensive Plan in 1987. Anne Laurent, head of the Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD), proposed a two-year process for updating the Comprehensive Plan. However, the use of old Vision Statements and current Strategic Plans met with resistance from both community and Council members. A perceived lack of plans for early public input also met with concern. After much public and Council input, it was decided that CEDD would come back with a revised and more specific process for updating the Comprehensive Plan.

On July 23, the County Council chose a new Board of Public Utilities member to replace outgoing member Timothy Neal. They chose Jeff Johnson, who is an engineer and project manager at Los Alamos National Laboratory and has lived in Los Alamos for 25 years.

On July 7th, the County Council had to decide whether or not to accept the donation of a sheriff's vehicle from Santa Fe County. This was a highly contentious subject because Sheriff Lucero has been trying for years to get a sheriff's vehicle for himself and his deputies. Although he has been offered access to a county fleet vehicle, he has refused. After much Council discussion and public input, the vote to accept the vehicle failed with a 3 to 3 vote (Chair Kristen Henderson was absent). The reasoning

for the refusal was basically that the job of sheriff in Los Alamos County is mainly administrative, and it has no law enforcement duties. In this regard, our county is unique in New Mexico.

Lynn Jones

Bag Fee Debate Continued

For its June 18 meeting, the Los Alamos County Environmental Sustainability Board requested a prepared statement from each side of the bag fee controversy relating their positions to the goals of the Council's Strategic Leadership Plan.

Following the statements, the board members reported on the responses to a survey of local businesses when asked how many bags they distributed and how they would feel about a ban or fee. Unfortunately, owners and managers were not all asked the same questions. Of course Smith's gives out the most bags by far, perhaps 3,600 per month in Los Alamos and 72,000 at the White Rock store. (The manager of the Los Alamos store was guessing.) Neither manager anticipated a problem if a bag fee was imposed.

Environmental Services Manager Angelica Gurule reported on the problems of handling the bags at Friedman Recycling, the destination for the contents of our blue bins. The alternative is to put the bags in the recycling container at Smith's, which ships them to plastic bag recycling facilities.

Having heard the opinions and information gathered, the board was unable to reach consensus on a recommendation to Council. Various motions were made, ranging from "forming a committee to research other options" to "reducing single-use plastic bags" to "no further action." All failed.

At the July 16 Environmental Sustainability Board meeting the issue was again on the agenda after the Council repeated its request for a recommendation from the board. Prior to the meeting, the Sierra Club and the League sent a

letter to the board members. The letter said, in part, "The Council depends on its board and the staff of the Environmental Services Division as the experts on environmental sustainability in Los Alamos County. The direction from the Council authorizes the staff time needed to help the board determine appropriate options." A number of questions followed.

Suzie Havemann made the first motion, proposing two options for the Council. The first was a request that the Council direct staff to do the research needed for the board to make a more fact-based recommendation and included a detailed list of questions to address. The second option was to do nothing. The motion failed, as did several others. At last the newest member of the board, John Bliss, made a motion to recommend to Council that they act to educate and encourage citizens to reduce consumption of natural resources, including plastic bags. That motion passed and the recommendation will be sent to Council.

Board of Public Utilities Meeting

Future Energy Resources

The Future Energy Resources Committee, chaired by Robert Gibson and including three League members - Ed Birnbaum, Don Machen and Kathy Taylor - presented their report at the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) meeting on July 15.

The committee, created by the BPU, was given three tasks: to recommend a definition of carbon neutrality for the County, to study and recommend future renewable energy generation resources, and to study and recommend policy toward distributed generation in the County. Over the course of ninety minutes Gibson summarized the findings. The report may be viewed on-line at

<http://www.losalamosnm.us/gov/bcc/utilitiesboard/Pages/FERCommittee.aspx>

The simplest assignment was to define the County's carbon neutrality goal, which they did as follows:

FER recommends that by 2040 electricity distributed to LA County consumers (exclusive of DOE/LANL) be generated or purchased from sources that do not cause any significant net release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases.

Regarding future energy resources, the committee recommended divesting the coal-burning generating assets. In addition to its ownership share in the San Juan Generating Station, the County has a "life-of-plant" (i.e., possibly after 2040) power purchase agreement at the Laramie River Station, which might be sold now.

To replace the coal, the committee recommended a combination of nuclear, local "firm" photovoltaic, and market purchases. "Firm" means solar energy backed up by batteries or some other method to make the energy available when the sun is not shining. Of course, the County also owns hydroelectric turbines, but this

is fully used as base load and is not available to backup other generators. Their output varies considerably, and might be diminished by future drought.

Distributed energy resources, including solar arrays on rooftops, are currently valuable in Los Alamos for reducing daytime demand. The power would be more valuable if it could be stored and also be accessed by the utility. The committee said that, "policies and rates should favor firm and dispatchable energy." They also concluded that, "Rates should fairly allocate the cost of maintaining the distribution system, recognize that electricity has different values at different times, and promote the value of firm solar energy in moving LAC towards zero carbon emissions."

A well-deserved round of applause followed the report, which the board accepted. Members of the public and the board noted the importance of following up quickly with a plan for the intensive staff work needed to move toward the goal for 2040. DPU Manager Tim Glasco had anticipated the need; he had already put the item on the agenda for the next meeting of the BPU.

San Juan Generating Station

The second topic of the evening was a request for board approval of a number of agreements necessary to restructure operations at the San Juan Generating Station after 2017, when several owners will withdraw coincident with significant environmental upgrades. Deputy Manager Steve Cummins explained the agreements and focused on the benefits of continuing County participation until 2022. Los Alamos is one of nine owners of the plant and all nine must sign the agreements before the Public Regulations Committee meets on August 1 to consider PNM's request for approval. Without that approval, the plan will fail. While it might seem preferable for the plant to shut down entirely in 2017, it would be very expensive. Los Alamos has already invested in the necessary equipment to continue operations and must pay various other costs regardless of

whether the plant is generating electricity. Also, all of that replacement power would have to be purchased on the open market at uncertain cost.

During public comment Mark Jones, League member and Sierra Club chairman, objected to the lack of transparency on the part of the DPU. For many months confidentiality agreements were cited as the reason for secrecy, but since the participants have now completed San Juan Restructuring negotiations, it seems that Los Alamos residents could have been given the financial information about the advantages and disadvantages of further participation prior to the July 15 meeting.

The BPU approved the agreements without enthusiasm. Now the focus should be on securing additional carbon free energy so that in 2018, when presented with an option to extend the SJGS contract past 2022, the BPU may refuse.
Barbara Calef

ISIS, the Middle East, and US Policy: Regional Reflections Since the Iran Agreement

On September 17 the League and AAUW will host a talk by Emile Nakhleh at Fuller Lodge. Dr. Nakhleh is a government consultant on national security issues, particularly Islamic radicalization, terrorism, and the Arab states of the Middle East. He is a retired Senior Intelligence Service Officer, a Research Professor and Coordinator of national security programs at UNM, a National Intelligence Council/IC Associate, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

The talk will highlight the continuing threat from ISIS, the factors that drive it, and its apparent resiliency. The presentation will also focus on U.S. regional policy and the threats and challenges it faces in the coming decade in light of the Iran agreement and the integration of Iran in the international community.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail to: LWV Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: _____

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Check here if you are willing to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage.

Check here if you wish to receive friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories

Single membership: \$45

Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$65

Single Sustaining membership: \$75

Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95

Note: Membership checks should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos

Additional ways to support the local League

Unrestricted contribution (not tax deductible): \$ _____

LWV Education Fund (tax deductible): \$ _____

Note: Checks for tax-deductible contributions must be payable to LWVLA Ed. Fund and not combined with any other payments.

Interests (check as many as apply)

- One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-drive mailings, etc.)
Affordable Housing
Election Reform
Fuller Lodge
Land Use
Local Government
Medically Indigent Fund
Public Transportation
Sustainability
Water Issues
Not sure (I just support LWV)

Other (please suggest) _____

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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