



# CONSERVATION

A Newsletter Published by the New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance

## Olla Irrigation? Oh Yeah!

At the Alliance's July 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, held at New Mexico Tech's Joe Skeen Library in Socorro, Curtis Smith of NMSU Cooperative Extension caught the imagination of all present with his brief description of "olla" irrigation. The *olla* (pronounced *oi-ya*) is an unglazed clay pot, buried among plants and filled periodically with water. Water seeps through the clay, and plant roots grow around the urn, clasping the container to absorb its leaking moisture. The open end of the *olla* extends above ground so the urn can be refilled as water is absorbed. A flat cover is placed over the top to avoid evaporation.

Smith says the unglazed pots are hard to find; he's successfully substituted plastic milk jugs, with a couple of holes punched in the shoulders of the bottom, along the sides, and quite a few on the upper shoulders. His buried jugs have lasted two years, protected from the sun and hidden from view. That can solve an irrigation and a trash problem at the same time!

*Olla* irrigation virtually eliminates runoff and evaporation, allowing the plant to absorb nearly 100 percent of the water. Modern systems, including drip irrigation, lose water to evaporation, and they tend to clog. *Olla* gardening also helps gardeners who can't irrigate frequently because of water conservation ordinances or time constraints.

Proper plant and *olla* selection is important, Smith says.

- Choose low-water-use, non-woody herbaceous plants. Woody plants can break clay urns or pierce plastic jugs as their roots grow in diameter.
- Match *olla* porosity, size, and shape to plants' water needs, root size and root distribution.
- Cluster *ollas* and plants to maximize water-use efficiency.
- Match *olla* diameters with the diameter of plant clusters. Use shallow, broad *ollas*, for clumps of grasses and annuals.
- *Olla* pottery can be a decorative element in the landscape—the above-ground portions of *ollas* should be glazed or treated to prevent evaporation. But don't coat the portions below ground! Water must be able to seep through the clay.

*Olla*, continued on page 2

## Creative Wastewater Use

The Manzano Conservation Foundation and the Valley Improvement Association (VIA) are looking for creative ways to use wastewater to serve community goals in the Rio Communities area southeast of Los Lunas.

VIA, a nonprofit organized to foster and promote the development of Rio Communities, sold its Rio Grande Utility Company to the N.M. Water Service Company in June 2002. The water treatment plant's effluent, presently about 150,000 gallons per day, is being discharged at VIA's Veterans' Memorial Park. Weed control became a problem in the discharge area. Last year, the sister nonprofits began looking for a productive use for the treated wastewater.

The Manzano Conservation Foundation (MCF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit formed by VIA in 2002 to preserve the natural and cultural resources on sensitive land in the Rio Communities. The MCF is spearheading plans for a BioFilter Project, which will use the treated wastewater to

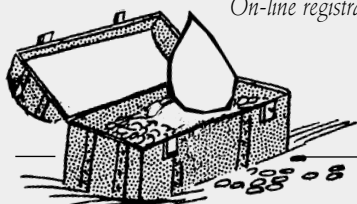


*Present discharge site.*

*BioFilter*, continued on page 3

## News bits

**Community Water Conservation Conference:** Tues., Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> through Thurs., Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, at the Old Town Sheraton, Albuquerque. After July 31<sup>st</sup>, registration is \$150. A rich menu of sessions of interest to professionals, academics, and water managers include topics such as: drought management; strategic planning for demand management; alternative water supplies; rebate programs and rate structures; legislative water issues; gray water recycling and management of recycled water; and management of water supply. Up to 10 Continuing Education credits have been approved by the N.M. Board of Landscape Architects.



On-line registration and information at <http://www.watertaskforce.org/Conference>, or contact Leann DeMouche, (505) 646-3973, [ldemouch@nmsu.edu](mailto:ldemouch@nmsu.edu). Potential exhibitors should contact Christy Smith, (505) 855-5241, [csmith2@ch2m.com](mailto:csmith2@ch2m.com).

**New Mexico Drought Summit 2004:** Mon., Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> and Tues., Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>, at UNM Continuing Education, 1634 University Blvd., NE, Albuquerque.

Yes, Virginia, there *is* a free lunch. There is no charge for the conference, and a box lunch will be provided.

The Drought Summit is sponsored by the Governor's Drought Task Force, N.M. Office of the State Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Southwest Strategy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the N.M. Water Conservation Alliance.

Register by September 10th, by sending your name, affiliation, phone, email address to: [cindy.nycz@nm.usda.gov](mailto:cindy.nycz@nm.usda.gov) or by fax: (505) 761-4462.

### 2004 New Mexico Water Research

**Symposium:** A one-day technical symposium on August 10, 2004, Macey Center, New Mexico Tech, Socorro, NM. The registration fee for everyone, including speakers, poster presenters, and other attendees is \$20/person. The fee will be waived for students presenting a paper or poster (you still must register). The fee includes lunch, breaks, and notebooks with abstracts.

Online registration at <http://wrii.nmsu.edu/conf/tc04/regis.html>

**49th Annual New Mexico Water Conference: Water Desalination And Reuse Strategies For New Mexico,** September 21-22, 2004 at the Ruidoso Convention Center.

Online conference registration at <http://wrii.nmsu.edu/conf/conf04/regis.html>.

## Good News from Our Members:

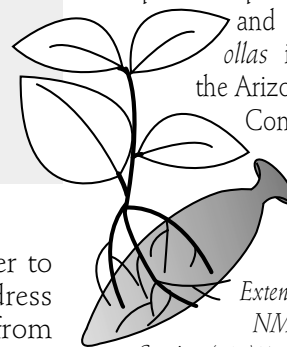
**FROM LORRI SKEIE-CAMPBELL** of Rio Rancho Utilities we hear that the Rio Rancho business community is responding positively to the recently-implemented water-waste enforcement. Several businesses are voluntarily removing high-water turf areas and replacing with xeriscape and/or modifying existing irrigation systems. Homeowners have even called back, once they've received a water-waste notification, thanking the Utilities Department for bringing it to their attention!

**FROM MICHAEL MECKE** of Texas Cooperative Extension we hear that the First Annual Prairie Festival will be held by the Llano Estacado Audubon Society at the Municipal Garden & Arts Center (4215 S. University) in Lubbock. Entry to the Festival on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 10am-5pm, is free; there is a \$10 charge for the prairie field trips in the Lubbock area on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, which begin at 9. The Festival will promote appreciation for the importance of the prairie and its wildlife, with a focus on Black-tailed Prairie Dogs and Burrowing Owls.

For more information, [Erootsmcbride@aol.com](mailto:Erootsmcbride@aol.com).

Olla, continued from page 1

Curtis Smith will be at NMSU's Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center Field Day on August 18<sup>th</sup>. You will find him near the xeriscape demonstration garden. He will teach a class on Botany and one on Xeriscape at the UNM Taos Campus on Sept. 11, 18, 25, and Oct. 2; and he will speak about *ollas* in the landscape at the Arizona Highlands Garden Conference in Sedona on October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.



For more information, contact Curtis W. Smith, Extension Horticulture Specialist, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, (505)275-2576, [cusmith@nmsu.edu](mailto:cusmith@nmsu.edu)

### Magazines feature Water Issues:

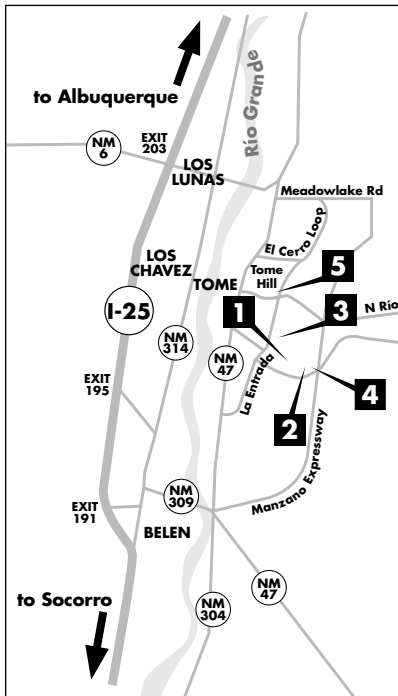
The June/July 2004 issue of *National Wildlife*, a monthly published by the National Wildlife Fund, is all about water. This special issue is called "The Shape of Water in America." Subscription comes with membership in the National Wildlife Federation. Issue found at <http://www.nwf.org/nationalwildlife/>.

You may also be interested in the World Wildlife Fund's August 2003 publication, *Running Pure: The importance of forest protected areas to drinking water*. Download at <http://www.panda.org/downloads/freshwater/runningpurereport.pdf>

The Fall 2004 issue of *Resources*, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service's agricultural communications magazine, will all be about water. Download or subscribe at <http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/pubsresourcesmag/welcome.html>.

### Would you rather receive the Current electronically?

Several respondents to the Alliance survey indicated they would prefer to receive the Current via e-mail. To do so, please send your e-mail address to Cheri Vogel, [cvogel@seo.state.nm.us](mailto:cvogel@seo.state.nm.us) with a request to be removed from the snail-mail list and added to the e-mail list.



- 1 Joshua Schmitz Eagle Scout Rest Area
- 2 Water Conservation Garden
- 3 UNM-Valencia Campus
- 4 Rio Grande Veterans' Memorial Park
- 5 La Puerta del Sol Sculpture

*BioFilter*, continued from page 1

test a variety of plants for their growth in effluent. The results of the tests will be used in planting other Rio Communities parks. The additional effluent that will be available when the treatment plant is at full capacity will also be used on the parks.

The BioFilter Project is seen as a rich educational resource for the seven schools built on land donated by VIA—five K-12 schools, the Career Academy and UNM's Valencia Branch Campus. Students at UNM's School of Architecture and Planning developed individual designs for the BioFilter's 120 acres as a class project, drawing on the advice of experts from UNM, NMSU, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Cooperative Extension Service. These plans are now under engineering and hydrologic review. Elements from all the student plans will be combined in the ultimate project.

The BioFilter Project's goals are: to use effluent creatively, to increase recharge, to test

the effluent, to improve wildlife habitat, to model the effects on plants and grasses, to build an attractive landscape, and to develop an educational model of the whole cycle from the water source to households to effluent to reuse and back to the water source.

The Biofilter Project complements other VIA/MCF community projects—a water-conservation garden, the Veterans' Park, and the La Puerta del Sol monumental sculpture by Tomé Hill, as well as bicycle and pedestrian pathways. Recently an ambitious Eagle Scout, Joshua Schmitz, designed and implemented a rest area on one of these pathways, constructing travertine benches, planting trees, and placing boulders to protect the trees from dunebuggies.

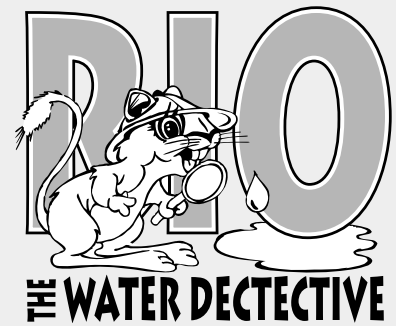
*Jacqueline Guilbault of MCF gave an informative presentation on the BioFilter Project and VIA's other natural resource activities at the Alliance's July 8th meeting in Socorro.*

## Hey Kids!

The new elementary-school water conservation curriculum developed by the OSE's Water Conservation Office has completed its pilot run. New Mexico teachers responded enthusiastically, and the curriculum graphics are now being prepared.

The curriculum takes kids on a journey of water self-awareness guided by Rio the Water Detective, a water-savvy kangaroo rat. The OSE hopes for a January publication.

*For information, contact Cheri Vogel at (505) 827-4272 or by e-mail [cvogel@seo.state.nm.us](mailto:cvogel@seo.state.nm.us).*



## Reclamation Grants

Reclamation's 2005 Conservation Grants have been awarded. The Alliance is happy to report that Reclamation has pledged continued support for publication of the *Current*. The grant provides for full funding in the first year, 2/3 in the second and 1/3 in the third. The Alliance is considering shifting the funding for the newsletter to the

*Current's* readers and Alliance members by the end of the third year.

Some other Reclamation grants went to:

- Children's Water Festival in Albuquerque and Santa Fe
- Children's Water Festival in Carlsbad, (N.M. Assoc. of Conservation Districts)

- Middle Rio Grande Rolling Rivers Educational Project (Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District)
- Outreach Program (N.M. Water Conservation Alliance/City of Albuquerque)
- Flow Measurement for Improved Acequia Water Management, (N.M. State University at Alcalde)
- Sprinkler and Holding Pond Development for Good Management and Efficient Water Use (N.M. State University at Tucumcari)

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## New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance

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Chris Garcia edits the *Conservation Current*. Send article submissions and requests to [chrisgarcia@plateautel.net](mailto:chrisgarcia@plateautel.net). Production is funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; design is provided by Kenesson Design, Inc.; and printing is by Downtown Printing. Thanks to Jacqueline Guilbault, Joe Alderete, Curtis Smith, Michael Mecke, Alice Darilek, Colleen Logan, and Cheri Vogel for their contributions to this issue.

The September Water Conservation Alliance meeting will be during lunch on **Thursday, September 2** at the Community Water Conference in Albuquerque. Watch for the room announcement at the Conference.

## A Waterwise Guide to Trees

The N.M. Office of the State Engineer's newest water-conservation brochure concisely sets out how to efficiently water and care for trees—especially during drought conditions. A step-by-step guide shows how to properly plant and irrigate trees to keep them healthy. The brochure also provides a short list of waterwise trees for New Mexico's three basic climate zones (Northern/Mountain, Central, and Southern), and website sources for additional information about trees and tree care.

Free copies of this and many other water-conservation publications are available from the Office of the State Engineer's Water Conservation Program.

Call toll-free at 1-800-WATER-NM, email [waternm@ose.state.nm.us](mailto:waternm@ose.state.nm.us), or download a pdf at <http://www.ose.state.nm.us/water-info/conservation/TreeBrochure.pdf>.



## Alliance Considers Conservation Awards

The New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance is discussing implementation of an awards program to recognize contributions to water conservation from outstanding individuals and programs in New Mexico. An awards-program proposal will be brought to the September 9th Alliance meeting.

The awards might be

- Unstructured: Alliance members could nominate individuals or programs for recognition at any time, and the decision to make the award made by attendees at any regular Alliance meeting. Awards could be distributed whenever appropriate, and winners would be announced in the *Current*.
- Structured: Annual requests for applications for awards would be made. A committee of judges would make awards in defined categories, based on points and scoring. Winners would be recognized at a major annual event (the Xeriscape or WRRRI conference for example).

Richard Chapman, who volunteered to develop the proposal, will appreciate your ideas: [rjchapman@aol.com](mailto:rjchapman@aol.com) (505) 888-1733.

