

San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Over a Decade of Dedication to Public Lands Integrity
1998-2013

1. **In 1998**, SLVEC submitted a Citizen's Management Alternative (CMA). Approximately one-half of the 1.86 million acres of Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) is now prescribed as either Back Country or Designated Wilderness.
2. **1999**, SLVEC organized, advocated and testified before Congress for the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Act of 2000 preserving the 100,000 acre former Baca Ranch, moving this pristine landscape into Public Land. The ranch is now part of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Baca National Wildlife Refuge, and a Baca Mountain Tract addition to National Forest.
3. **2001-2004**, SLVEC was appointed to the Great Sand Dunes NPS Management Plan Advisory Council by Interior Secretary Gayle Norton, pushing for recommendation of 50,000 acres of wilderness designation. **Acquiring the mineral rights beneath the National Park will move this Wilderness recommendation forward.**
4. **2001-2003**, SLVEC, in cooperation with Southern Rockies Conservation Alliance (SRCA) inventoried one-half million areas of Roadless Areas within Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF), using ground truthing forms for documentation and GIS/GPS points imbedded in photographs. Thousands of photos were taken linked to GPS.
5. **2004-2005**, SLVEC performs a BLM Rapid Assessment Inventory on ½ million acres of BLM roads for the SLV BLM Travel Management Plan and submitted a Citizens Management Alternative. A 51% road closure was recommended by BLM.
6. **2005**, SLVEC and Colorado Wild filed a lawsuit challenging the Rio Grande County Commissioners' decision on accepting the "Village at Wolf Creek" plat design, a proposed development of 2,122 units near the continental divide. District Judge Kuenhold agreed with the claim because there was no year round access to the land.
7. **2006**, SLVEC testified before Congress and the Rio Grande Natural Area Act was passed, designating 33 miles of Rio Grande Corridor,

from the southern boundary of the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge to the New Mexico State line, extending protection for one-quarter mile from either bank of the river, under BLM jurisdiction.

2006, Judge Marcia Krieger agreed with an adjacent landowner and SLVEC lawsuit challenge of the Rio Ox-bow Land Exchange claiming that it was not in the public interest. This decision protected some of the few remaining public access points in the Upper Rio Grande. The case has also brought precedence regarding public/private land trades in Colorado to require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

2006–2012, Colorado Wild and SLVEC challenged the Forest Service EIS decision granting access to "Village at Wolf Creek". In 2008 Supreme Court Justice Kane agreed with these claims, including the Forest Service narrowing the scope of the EIS. Another "Village at Wolf Creek" land exchange is now being proposed and analyzed.

2005–2012, Water Quality Awareness Project, recipient of EPA Environmental Justice Community Problem-Solving and (CPS) and recently received EPA CARE 1 Grant. Fewer than ten grants were awarded throughout the USA. SLVEC was recipient of the EPA Environmental Stewardship Award (2007) for organizing free household well testing in small communities throughout the SLV. Over 800 household wells have received this free well testing. SLVEC has begun Environmental Health Risk assessments within 13 communities of the SLV. The CARE Project will be setting priorities based on community input to determine next steps for impacting environmental health issues, plus sending out 500 free radon test kits.

2006–2010, Challenge of Oil and Gas development within the SLV Baca National Wildlife Refuge, SLVEC spearheaded a legal challenge of Oil and Gas Drilling on the Baca National Wildlife Refuge because the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process was being avoided. This case has recently settled with US Fish and Wildlife Service. Lexam Explorations, Inc. is now a willing seller of its mineral rights and the opportunity to acquire and retire these rights is underway, which would permanently protect the area.

2007 - San Luis Hills and Flat Top Mesa, -Parcels Withdrawn

2008 - Leasing on Rio Grande National Forest and BLM lands-144,000 acres deferred

2011–13 - San Francisco Creek, near Del Norte, CO -Application to

Drill (APD) filed with Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) for 5,000 ft exploratory O & G Well by Hughes Oil. Filed comments to the BLM for their EIA process. BLM recommendations to be issued late summer 2013.

2007-2013, The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (NHA), signed into law by President Obama in March 2009, establishes cultural, historical, and natural resource preservation and protection for the southern three counties within the San Luis Valley. The Great Sand Dunes Park and Preserve lands are included within the NHA. SLVEC has served for 4 years on the Board which is now ushering in a Management Plan.

2008-2012, SLVEC works with the public and continues to comment on the BLM proposed Solar Energy Zones (SEZ's) on 22,000 acres of land within the San Luis Valley.

Recent Public Involvement

- With Conejos County Clean Water taking the lead, reached a settlement agreement regarding the Department of Energy (DOE) proposal for a low level Transwaste facility in Antonito. This transwaste transfer point has been withdrawn. The material was to originate from Los Alamos, NM. A site specific (NEPA) public process will have to be conducted if DOE decides to reopen this proposal.
- Organized another round of public comments challenging the Air Force Low Altitude Tactical Navigation (LATN) Flyovers, bringing together organizations and sharing information from Colorado and New Mexico constituencies. The proposed project spans 62,000 sq. miles and impacts 38 counties in some of Colorado's most remote Backcountry.
- Hosted Three Public Education forums with Transmission Line Coalition (TLC) surrounding the proposed Transmission line over La Veta Pass, including bringing the utilities (Tri-State and Xcel) together for public discussion. SLVEC supported public scrutiny of this proposal has resulted in the "postponement" of this project. In 2012, Xcel pulled its participation in the line making its likelihood of further pursuit doubtful.
- Co-sponsored a Solar Workshop with other groups at SLV Rural

Electric Coop in Monte Vista, CO to bring small businesses and communities together to discuss a community scale solar siting process.

2012 included the development of a San Luis Valley Renewable Energy Master Plan to infuse support of community based siting of solar installations.