

# SIERRA COUNTY SENTINEL

FEBRUARY 21, 2014

22 PAGES, 2 INSERTS • 50¢

## News Briefs

### Resource Fair

The T-or-C Schools will host a resource fair Thursday, February 27 during parent/teacher conferences. For details on who will be present and where see.

Story on Page A4

### Chandlers Speak On Legislation

The Chandlers have spoken to the *Sentinel* regarding the proposed legislation in Santa Fe that would extend CYFD oversight on youth facilities such as that at the Tierra Blanca Ranch.

See Story Page A3

### Burn Planned

The BLM office has announced a planned prescribed burn for the Lewis Cain allotment to begin Wednesday.

Story on Page A12

### School Looking At Dog Service

While not budgeted for the current school year, the T-or-C School Board was presented with a hands on demonstration for canine services that could be planned for next year, with action from the board.

Story on Page A12

### Contract Awarded On SVH Work

The Sierra County Commission awarded the contract for the recent bid of the SVH Emergency Room and Central Plant work to Warren Construction of Las Cruces.

See Story Page A2

### Know Your Neighbor

Highlighted in this week's feature of local residents, is Julie Durham, who fell in love with Sierra County as a child, and despite moving around the country, found herself at home and in love in T-or-C.

Story on Page B10

- Sports on Page A7
- Obits on Page A11



	HIGH	LOW
February 14	77	50
February 15	81	51
February 16	75	54
February 17	70	47
February 18	73	42
February 19	74	45
February 20	63	46

AVGS. FOR WEEK BEGINNING FEB. 14  
High 73° - Low 41° - Total Prec. 0

### Extended Forecast

SOURCE: National Weather Service

	<b>Friday, February 21</b> P. Cloudy - high 70, low 44
	<b>Saturday, February 22</b> P. Cloudy - high 73, low 45
	<b>Sunday, February 23</b> P. Cloudy - high 73, low 44
	<b>Monday, February 24</b> Sunny - high 75, low 46
	<b>Tuesday, February 25</b> P. Cloudy - high 76, low 45
	<b>Wednesday, February 26</b> M. Sunny - high 72, low 46
	<b>Thursday, February 27</b> M. Sunny - high 69, low 45
	<b>Friday, February 28</b> Sunny - high 72, low 48

email: sentinel@gpkmedia.com

**INSERTS INSIDE:**  
**Bullock's Grocery**  
**Family Dollar**



## Jail Administrator's Contract Terminated

By Chuck Wentworth  
SENTINEL

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Following extensive closed-door executive session discussions last Tuesday afternoon, Sierra County Commissioners reconvened the board's regular public session and voted unanimously to terminate the contract of Detention Center Administrator Curtis Cherry.

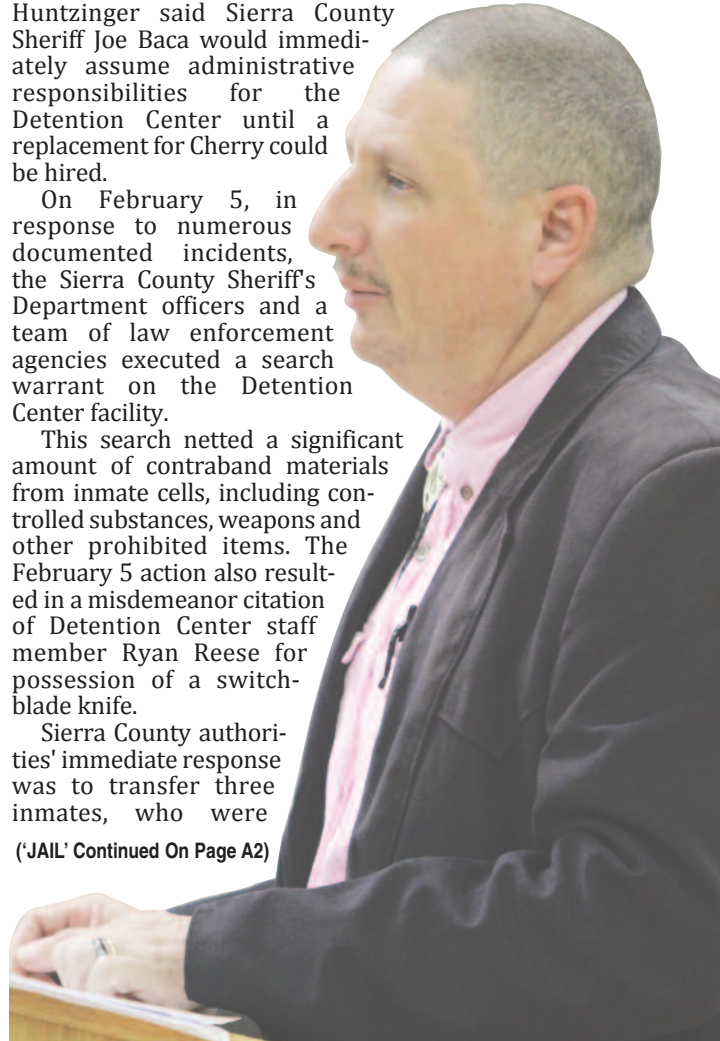
As a result, County Manager Mark Huntzinger said Sierra County Sheriff Joe Baca would immediately assume administrative responsibilities for the Detention Center until a replacement for Cherry could be hired.

On February 5, in response to numerous documented incidents, the Sierra County Sheriff's Department officers and a team of law enforcement agencies executed a search warrant on the Detention Center facility.

This search netted a significant amount of contraband materials from inmate cells, including controlled substances, weapons and other prohibited items. The February 5 action also resulted in a misdemeanor citation of Detention Center staff member Ryan Reese for possession of a switchblade knife.

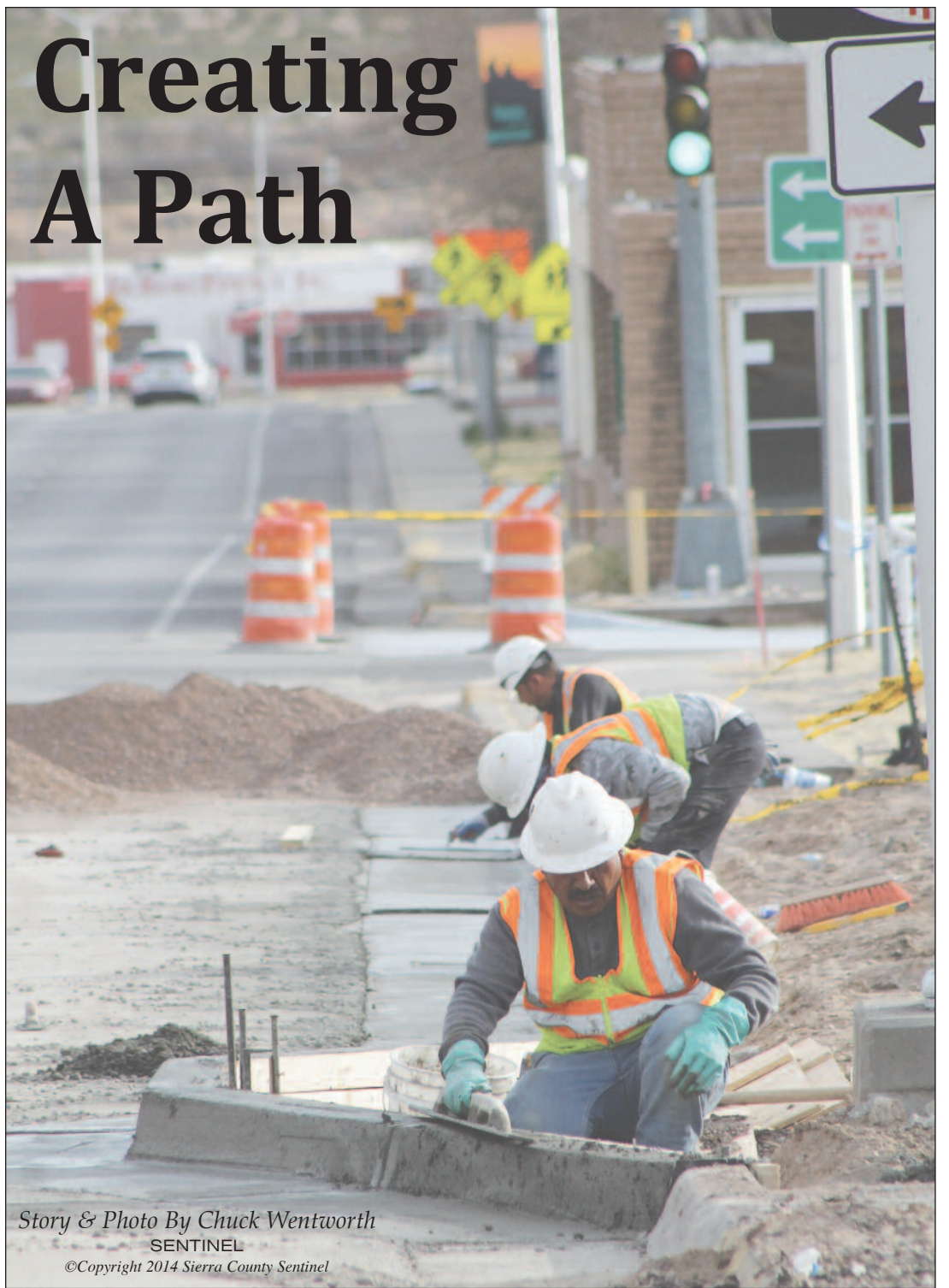
Sierra County authorities' immediate response was to transfer three inmates, who were

(\*JAIL\* Continued On Page A2)



(SENTINEL File Photo)

## Creating A Path



Story & Photo By Chuck Wentworth  
SENTINEL

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As promised during a special public meeting last August, officials with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) began a planned renovation of Date Street earlier this week.

The estimated \$1.8 million project will include installation of sidewalks, ramps and other features, providing an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pedestrian corridor from Third Avenue northward to H.R. Ashbaugh Street (Wal-Mart intersection).

The NMDOT project will install improvements to both sides of Date Street between Third and Ninth Avenue and will include

expanded on-street parking in this area. The initiative will then continue improvements along the western side of Date Street northward to H.R. Ashbaugh Street.

NMDOT officials expect to complete the initiative by August of this year and are encouraging motorists to exercise extra caution while passing through active construction zones.

Further information about the project is available by contacting Aaron Chavarria through the NMDOT offices, located at 2912 East Pine Street in Deming, New Mexico, or by phoning (575) 544-6575. Chavarria may also be contacted by email at aaron.chavarria@state.nm.us.

## Transforming Sierra County Into An Adventure Destination



Photo By JR Absher  
For The SENTINEL

By Etta Pettijohn  
For The SENTINEL

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Cuchillo resident LeRoy Henderson was in his yard last winter when a couple of out-of-state elk hunters drove into his driveway to inquire if an antique truck he had was for sale.

After telling them no, Henderson said they asked him "What is there to do around here — is there someone we can hire to take us on some

hikes or sightseeing tours?"

The two men had paid thousands of dollars to spend a week hunting elk in the nearby Gila National Forest, and after bagging their limit on day one were looking for some adventure nearby, they said.

Sierra County residents know there is an abundance of adventurous activities within a day's drive, but for an out-of-town visitor who ends up here without a guide to direct them to these

(\*TRANSFORM\* Continued On Page A9)

## Enrollment Deadline Nears: Help Available

The Sierra Health Council Community Training Collaborative has helped organize the following events to assist you in obtaining the best health insurance coverage for you and your family before it's too late. The deadline is March 31.

At our health insurance enrollment events we will help you create your account, view all the plans available in your area, and help you choose the appropriate plan for you and your family. Information to bring to the event includes your monthly income, record of expenses, family size and members, and social security numbers. Tax credits or other services that can subsidize your premium cost can be estimated at the events. After choosing a plan, you can enroll and then return to the site to review updates and the status of your plan.

If you are a resident of New Mexico and currently uninsured,

you can also sign up yourself or get assistance with the process through these websites: [www.bewellnm.com](http://www.bewellnm.com) or [www.NMHIX.com](http://www.NMHIX.com) (phone: 1-855-99-NMHIX).

These events are being conducted through the cooperation of HEROs (Health Extension Rural Offices, UNM), Coordinated Home Health Care, 4th Street Lab, Sierra Vista Community Health Center, Ben Archer, Health Action New Mexico (HANM), Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico (CAASNM), and the Income Support Division (ISD). This event was facilitated by Sierra Health Council, and funded in part by a grant from Con Alma Foundation.

For questions contact Reilly Hami, email [sierrahealthcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:sierrahealthcouncil@gmail.com) or cell phone 510-798-1071. More is available at [www.sierrahealthcouncil.com](http://www.sierrahealthcouncil.com)



Details On Each Stop On Page A9

### QUIET MOMENTS

Father, we know that everyone who lives leaves a legacy. An obituary is a bird's eye accounting of what they valued in life and often reveals what their children value as a result. We want to leave a legacy of love, the purest and highest kind of love, that can only be found in the Person of Jesus Christ, who laid down His life that we might be forgiven and enjoy eternal life. We want to remain steadfast in our Christian convictions so that we pass on that which makes a hopeful, positive, and eternal difference in one's journey here below and up above. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

## TOURISM---

(Continued From Page 1)

places, "what to do" remains a mystery.

Finding these out of the way places to view wildlife, camp, hike, and view historical and archeological wonders is something many travelers today are willing to pay for.

Many economically depressed areas across the U.S. have managed to take public land forests, hiking trails, ATV trails, lakes, rivers and other available (and free) resources available nearby and transform their communities by developing opportunities for adventure and/or eco tourism.

These efforts have brought jobs and prosperity to places that previously suffered poverty and hopelessness, and the same opportunities are available here in Sierra County.

### ADVENTURE/ECO TOURISM

The fastest growing segment in the tourism industry is in adventure travel. Adventure travel is defined as a vacation or trip that takes one off the beaten path, to a natural environment or remote location with the specific purpose of active physical participation and exploration of a new experience.

The global adventure travel market has "accelerated" at a 65 percent yearly rate since 2009, according to the Adventure Tourism Market Study, a consumer report by The George Washington University, conducted in partnership with the Adventure Travel Trade Association. It is, according to the Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry, both in the U.S. and abroad.

It's not surprising, considering more people are living clustered in urban or suburban areas, rather than open spaces, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Bureau data indicates 80.7 percent of Americans lived in urban areas in 2010, up nearly two percentage points from 2000.

It stands to reason people would prefer to spend their vacation time, and money, on adventures in open country free from the crowds and mundaneness.

This area is unique in that it has all the right ingredients, the lake, river, Gila National Forest, lava beds, hiking trails, ghost towns, archaeological wonders, and wildlife in place. And it is within a day's drive of many of these population centers (Albuquerque, Tuscon, El Paso, Phoenix, Denver, etc.), where residents would cherish a day hiking and camping in the Gila, kayaking in Elephant Butte, or listening to mating elk bugle on a frosty fall morning.

And people who recognize this, who understand what this area has to offer, are poised to bring the ones who hunger for adventure to our door.

### THEY ARE COMING, ARE WE READY?

There are no shortages of opinions on whether the Spaceport America facility is a pipe dream or will transform this area into a tourist mecca.

While many argue these questions, others are putting into place what it takes to accommodate those they believe will come here, with money to spend, and looking for adventure.

Virgin Galactic (VG), owned by Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group and aabar Investments PJS, aims to be the world's first commercial spaceline, and has accepted nearly \$80 million in deposits from approximately 640 individuals.

*Editor's Note: The following is the first in a series detailing the potential this area offers for the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry, adventure/eco tourism. Next week we'll give specific examples of areas across the nation that have turned adventure tourism into a thriving industry.*

The new spaceship (Space ShipTwo, VSS Enterprise) and carrier craft (WhiteKnightTwo, VMS Eve) have both been developed for Virgin Galactic's vehicle fleet by Mojave-based Scaled Composites, and Branson is predicting the first commercial launch will take place in 2014.

These space tourists will pay big bucks to experience an out-of-the-seat, zero-gravity trip with "astounding views of the planet from the black sky of space for tourist astronauts," as well as a "microgravity platform for researchers," according to the VG website.

This new age tourist will, likely, have family members traveling with them, and apparently have the finances to spend on showing them all the available adventure in this area, should they decide to spend time here.

VG officials have already inspected the Truth or Consequences Municipal Airport, indicating the facility could see traffic from those coming to experience space travel. VG employees and the tourists who come to see the facility are all potential customers for adventure outfitters here.

While the advent of space tourism could truly transform this area into a destination for those seeking extreme adventure, another entrepreneur, Ted Turner, is in the process of providing these travelers with even more opportunities. And, as Tom Waddell, manager of Turner's Armendaris Ranch in Sierra County said, "Ted doesn't do anything by accident."

### INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION/MARKETING

What business owner has not lamented about how important it is to advertise, and about how without advertising/promotion/marketing a product has little chance of success?

Between Turner and Branson this county is going to be known across the globe, without Sierra County officials and businesses having spent a dime. What business owner wouldn't want such exposure? NBCUniversal recently announced an exclusive multi-platform partnership with VG to televise the inaugural commercial space flight of Space ShipTwo. NBC News' Peacock Productions will chronicle the journey in its holdings, which include MSNBC, CNBC, SYFY, The Weather Channel and NBCNews.com, climaxing in a primetime special airing on NBC the night before launch, and a three-hour live event on "TODAY," hosted by Matt Lauer and Savannah Guthrie.

In addition, several high profile celebrities are signed up to have their flights recorded on music videos and more.

Turner Enterprises, headquartered in Atlanta, confirmed to the Sentinel they are developing a marketing and advertising plan for the Sierra Grande Resort they purchased last summer, and to announce an expansion of eco-tours on the two ranches Turner owns in Sierra County.

They also confirmed there have been "discussions" with Branson during the planning.

"We have had discussions with Virgin Galactic about providing ecotourism tours to Virgin Galactic tourists, and look forward to working with Virgin Galactic on expanding tourism opportunities in the region," said Elena Cizmaric,

manager, Corporate Communications for Turner Enterprises.

"Yes, we are in the process of developing a marketing and advertising plan for Sierra Grande and the eco tours," she said. "Tours have been conducted on the Ladder and Armendaris ranches for more than 20 years, with groups ranging from the Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon and the University of New Mexico visiting the ranches for tours and educational opportunities."

While the tours are primarily conducted to showcase the Turner vision of sustainable ranching and wildlife conservation, said Cizmaric, wildlife viewing and hunting on the ranches for commercial purposes also bring many here.

"Over the years hundreds of guests have visited the ranches on various tours," she said.

"We have offered limited opportunities for ecotourism on Turner ranches in recent years, including birding, photographic, wildlife and archaeological tours," she said, "But we are now looking to expand those opportunities through a collaboration with professional wildlife photographer James Blue."

Blue is a world-renowned photographer who takes others on photographic tours in east Africa and the American West.

Blue will be offering ecotours and nature photography on the Armendaris and Ladder ranches starting May 15, 2014. Tours will originate at the Sierra Grande Lodge and will offer guests rare opportunities to see and photograph wildlife, experience the evening Bat flight at the Jornada bat caves, and explore the remote upper reaches of Las Animas Creek (designated Important Bird Area) with more than 200 species of birds, said Cizmaric.

Guests may also walk or hike through the vast and rugged properties looking for deer, elk, black bear, bison, desert bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, mountain lion, oryx, bobcat, javelina, coyote, fox, and burrowing owl colonies prairie dog colonies.

"At the end of the tour each day, guests will return to the Sierra Grande Lodge to relax and enjoy the ancient restorative natural hot springs, holistic spa treatments and peaceful atmosphere," she said.

When asked if there is an average time these tourists stay Cizmaric said at the Turner-owned Vermejo Park Ranch in northern New Mexico, which is currently the only Turner ranch operating as a full service guest ranch, typical stays range from a few days to a week.

Cizmaric said they have just added a brand new gym space at the Sierra Grande and will continue to make upgrades to the property in the coming months, in anticipation of the increase in tours.

While the resort will still be open to the public, the eco tours are offered as an option for lodge guests to enjoy.

"Turner Enterprises looks forward to continuing our close relationship with local communities in Sierra County, and we're excited to be involved with the growing travel and tourism industry in the area," said Cizmaric.

What can be done to maximize the opportunities sure to come this way? How can local people turn these adventure seeking tourists into jobs and economic benefit for this area? See Part II of this series next week in the Sentinel for answers.

## A Quote To Remember

"I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

- Martin Luther [1483-1546]

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(SENTINEL Photo By Frances Luna)

**GRAND OPENING** - T-or-C Chamber members watch on as El Faro owner, Armida Baray cuts the ribbon during the grand opening celebration of the new restaurant in downtown T-or-C. On hand for the ribbon cutting were T-or-C Chamber President Hans Townsend, members Jim and Bettie Brannon and Sid Bryan and Baray's family and staff.

## Natural Wonders = Premier Destination

Below are just a few of the area's natural wonders that could provide guided adventure tourism opportunities:

- The 362,885-acre **Armendaris Ranch** offers Chihuahuan and semi-desert grasslands with cottonwoods, willow; Fra Cristobal Mountain range, with desert bighorn sheep, bison, pronghorn, desert mule deer, mountain lion, javelin and oryx; lava tubes of Jornada lava field, summer home for one of the largest bat populations in North America; historic Camino Real; and a Spanish mine dating back to 1658.

- Backcountry camping** and hiking. In addition to the scenic landscape there are many historical and archeological wonders within a day's hike on the national forest and Bureau of Land Management properties.

- Big Game (elk) hunting/buging** tours. In some parts of the country (see next week's Part II) guides charge up to \$150 for a half day to take small groups to areas where elk are known to congregate during mating rituals. The haunting sounds of the males "bugling" to their potential mates is an outdoor experience available on millions of acres of public and private lands in and around the Gila National Forest, which has one of the best elk populations in the Southwestern U.S.

- Bird watching** tours. The Rio Grande is an important flyway for wintering birds, some so rare they draw people from across the globe to see them. As part of its eco tours the Armendaris (which borders the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge) offers viewing and photography opportunities. According to Leigh Ann Vradenburg, executive director of the Friends of

the Bosque, the annual Crane Festival, held less than an hour from Sierra County, hosts 6,000 visitors, in addition to the 200,000 that visit the refuge annually.

- The 156,439-acre **Ladder Ranch** offers mixed ecosystems, from desert grasslands to pine forests. The Animas, Seco, Palomas, and Cuchillo streams; amphibians, fish and wildlife. Bison representing a unique historic gene pool; archaeological remnants of the Mimbres culture.

- James Blue Photo Tours** in east Africa and the American West. In Africa he hosts photographic tours of Mountain Gorillas and the big cats; Sierra County, photographing abundance of endangered/threatened species and native wildlife.

- Outdoor recreation.** According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation, 783 thousand New Mexico residents and nonresidents fished, hunted, or wildlife watched in New Mexico that year. Of those, 278 thousand fished, 69 thousand hunted, and 566 thousand participated in wildlife-watching activities, which includes observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife. In 2011, state residents and nonresidents spent \$937 million on wildlife recreation in the state, with trip-related expenditures of \$447 million. With close to 3 million acres in the Gila, and hundreds of thousands of acres of BLM land surrounding this area, the potential for wildlife watching activity is excellent. Elephant Butte Lake and the Rio Grande also offer wildlife viewing, kayaking, fishing, and numerous boating activities.



(Courtesy Photo/J.R. Absher)

The Lava fields of northeastern Sierra County are one of many geological wonders found in the area.

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- ★ Surprise! 79% of young voters, 18-34, read a newspaper in print or online at least once a week. Even on mobile devices, young voters turn to newspaper sources first for campaign and election news.
- ★ When it comes to reliable, accurate and in-depth information about local politics, newspapers - print and online - rank #1.\*

Your Best Connection Is The  
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\*Source: Moore Information (January 2012), American Voter Media Use