

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE'S WORK, 2012-13

The Natural Resources Committee met regularly through the year, normally biweekly in the fall and monthly in the spring. Members were Reed Benson (chair), Marsha Baum, Darcy Bushnell, Denise Fort, Eileen Gauna, John LaVelle, Zoe Lees (student), Michelle Miano (student), and Alex Ritchie. Major accomplishments for the year include:

- Hosting a series of speakers dealing with environmental and natural resource issues, supported by a small grant from the NREEL section of the New Mexico State Bar. Speakers were New Mexico Attorney General Gary King (the AG's role in natural resources and environmental issues in New Mexico), energy lawyers Cindy Murray and Laura Sanchez (development of new renewable energy sources in New Mexico), Prof. James Gustave Speth (new legal, political and governance approaches to environmental issues in the U.S.), and former FERC Commissioner Suedeen Kelly (the future of U.S. energy policy). All four were well attended and well received, and the Suedeen Kelly event included a reception at the law school following her lecture.
- Strengthening the lunchtime NR/E speaker series by offering more programs and providing free food for attendees. Speakers included Dr. James Davis of the New Mexico Environment Department (Kirtland AFB jet fuel spill and cleanup), Prof. David Gutzler (climate change and its impacts on New Mexico), Cindy Murray of PNM (pollution control settlement at San Juan Generating Station), and Josh Mann of the Bureau of Reclamation (the Endangered Species Act as applied to the Middle Rio Grande). The latter three programs, offered in the spring semester, each drew a decent crowd of 25 to 40 people.
- Updating and improving many of the NR/E program materials on the School of Law's website. Maintaining these materials is a work in progress.
- Working with the Environmental Law Society on a new welcome-to-school event in the first week of the fall semester. This event, held at the law school, was well attended by students and program faculty, and a good time was had by all.
- Discussing priorities for a potential new faculty hire for the program, filling the line of the retiring Denise Fort. The general view of the committee was that our most pressing needs for substantive expertise have been filled in recent years (most recently with the hiring of Alex Ritchie to teach oil & gas subjects), so we are in the fortunate position of being able to hire the strongest candidate without limiting ourselves to a particular sub-specialty. The committee remains interested, however, in providing more hands-on experiences for our students, either through an environmental clinic or some type of law-in-practice course.

It was a year of change for the NR/E faculty, with Alex Ritchie joining the team, Denise Fort announcing her retirement, and Eileen Gauna taking over as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Reed D. Benson
Chair, Natural Resources Committee
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