

The Conservation Champions



The 2009 Conservation Quest Prize Winners: the **GOLD MEDAL** goes to *Sandra Klessen* for her extra-ordinary personal commitment to energy conservation and sustainability; the **SILVER MEDAL** goes to *Hallie Taylor Wright with the Four Corners Youth Leadership Council* for youth oriented education and dedication to water conservation, and the **BRONZ MEDAL** goes to the *Alvord Community School* for integrating creativity conservation and student character building; **HONORABLE MENTION** to the *Santa Fe High School* for enjoining the Conservation Quest into their fall '09 science curriculum. The winners receive CCLI Conservation Champion medals, our admiration, financial appreciation prizes and this special feature on the website. For the public's encouragement we hereby publish the winners'

Pathways of Conservation:

Sandra Klessen - A Personal Commitment to Conservation

"I've always been thrifty (since age 8); so here's my entry into the "Conservation Quest:" What I do: (1) I make my own 3x5 cards and paper from scrap paper; (2) I use my solar-cooker twice a week; (3) on Nov. 1st each year I put up double plastic on all my windows; (4) I put a carpet on the cold-floored bathroom of my old adobe casita; (5) I have no PC, just use the one at the State Library; (6) on April 1st each year I have the landlord shut off both my stove and small natural gas heater till Nov. 1st (I use a 2-

burner electric hot plate to cook on till Nov.); (7) I have an energy efficient small humidifier/ vaporizer that keeps me from feeling cold and needing to turn on the heat; (8) My 1983 Toyota HB gets 45 mpg hwy., as it's a stick-shift, and I took out the front seat, keep it tuned-up, drive sensibly, etc. (I am contemplating removing the back seats also, as I use the car like a mini-truck anyway); (9) I've used only fluorescent lights for 30 years; (10) I never owned a clothes dryer for the 35 years I lived here; (11) I shut off the VCR and TV power each night; (12) I don't own a cell phone, microwave, an answering machine, or a blender; (13) I've used cloth bags for 5 years for groceries, etc.; (14) I have 2 old sewing machines and make some of my own clothes; (15) I have a monthly bus pass; (16) I'm still using an eggbeater and plan on buying a hand-cranked ice cream maker; (17) I have a compost heap, small flower and medium sized vegetable garden; (18) I add worms to the 3 previous areas; (19) I rarely eat at restaurants as I'm a great cook and make almost everything from scratch; (20) I never bought bottled water; (21) I wear silk clothes in winter for warmth; (22) I always have my water-heater and pipes wrapped (with insulation); (23) I have 2 rain barrels and next year will put up a gutter to catch the back porch runoff; (24) I have a food-dehydrator and dry apples, chili and collards I then freeze the remainder; (25) I have a fire pit to burn shiny paper and recycle the rest; (26) I've bought 95% of all my clothes and furnishings at the Goodwill, etc.; (27) I have a large bowl in my sink and catch 95% of the tap water, then pour it into the buckets and lug it to the flower garden daily; (28) there's a bucket in the shower also; (29) I keep the H2O (hot water) heater on "vacation setting" all year round; (30) I'm buying an energy-efficient space heater for the living room next month (the landlord refused to put in a wood stove unfortunately); (31) I use horse and llama manure on my garden so as not to buy steer manure; (32) I buy fresh eggs from Farmers; (33) April 1st each year I put up reusable solar film on all my windows; (34) I have no A/C, just a portable swamp cooler/box fan combo; (35) In 35 years I never had an electric bill over \$14! (I called PNM and asked them to send me a copy of my usual \$6/mo. bill I don't pay any utilities now); (36) I get \$5 haircuts at beauty school and wash my hair in the sink twice weekly; (37) My gas bill is probably about \$3-6/mo (you may call my landlord for verification); (38) In winter I bake a lot at a time and freeze much of what I bake; (39) I cut my 80 mg. statin pills in half; (40) In winter I wash up daily but only shower 2x/mo.; (41) Lastly I flush on brown, not yellow!

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra

P.S. My landlord is John xxxxxx (#xxx-xxxx); P.P.S. If I won I'd buy a pilot less ignition stove and a green house!; P3. I use pencils for daily planners, etc.; P4. I grow edible weeds to eat along with kale (3 types), collards, eggplants, etc.; P5. If I win the lottery, I'm building an underground house; P6. I wash some of my clothes by hand and wash my Toyota 2x/year."

Hallie Taylor Wright with Four Corners Youth Leadership Council

"I live in the desert where the cactus blooms, and the rain falls fast and hard, if it falls at all. Because of this, my family is very **water conscious**. All my life I've been taught to save water, and not waste this life giving resource. With my family, I collect rainwater to water the plants, work on not taking long showers, not leaving the water running, and not washing our clothes too much. But I also have another way of helping save the water we have. Bill Zeedyke's **creative water pathway** one-rock dams¹ are made to help with erosion, and require nothing but some rocks and a pair of helping hands.

Many people are ignorant to how dire our water situation really is. If we guide and teach these people, many might **change their ways** of water usage to help New Mexico. Starting with young people is a good way to teach, and most of them are eager to learn. I have made a **commitment** to helping with this education.

I am involved with a **community** Youth Leadership group called Roots and Shoots, started by Jane Goodall in 1991 in Tanzania. This is my second year, and I am on the Four Corners Youth Leadership Council, the National Youth Leadership Council, and I am teaching my own group. The Roots and Shoots group that I teach is made up of six kindergartners, and first graders, and one fourth grader. Our main focus and **commitment** has been their school's wetlands, and water issues. The kids have learned about how important water is, and how important it is to **conserve** in New Mexico. Every other meeting in the fall and spring, we test the water in the wetlands to see the temperature, PH, and oxygen. They have **committed** to make personal **changes** in their use of water and to help their families be more **conscious** of water use.

¹ One-rock dams are built using two methods. In one, you can place flat, thin rocks upright, next to each other, across the bed of the creek. In the other, the rocks are placed laying down along the bottom of the creek bed, creating a square or rectangle extending up the banks. In both methods smaller rocks are placed behind the big rocks. The big rocks break the flow of the water, and slow it down, so it doesn't erode the bank. The smaller rocks catch the sediment and hold it back to replace what has been eroded. After a while, the water behind the rocks will pool, as it would normally, and much of the erosion stops. From the pool created, the water can seep into the soil, and down to the aquifer, and other underground water sources that have not been refilling because the water runs too fast. The one-rock dams work with rain as well, especially since rain causes a lot of erosion and then runs to the river.

The Four Corners Youth Leadership Council has also been involved with water issues. In June, 2008, I attended their Youth Leadership Retreat. While there, we had a workshop about building one-rock dams to help with erosion, and restoring rivers. The workshop inspired me to try and help, so I experimented on my family's land. My family and I have built five one-rock dams across our occasionally flowing creek, and have been able to watch as restoration occurs. The rocks have caught the topsoil as it washed downstream, and held it back, creating a slower, wider flowing river, along with more vegetation. This has **conserved** our creek.

At the Youth Leadership Retreat this year at Wind River Ranch, near Las Vegas New Mexico, I was part of the Four Corners Youth Leadership Council, and was asked to teach a workshop. The workshop I chose to teach was about one-rock dams. We built two one-rock dams along the road side where the erosion was the worst. A few months later, I got word that they were working already. I made a positive **change** in the **conservation** of Wind River Ranch. During my presentation, we discussed check dams, and the difference between check dams and one-rock dams. Check dams require a lot of machine power, and human work, time, money, and constant renovation. They also cause harm to the native environment. One-rock dams, however, require a small amount of time, no renovation, and are at no cost to either the government, or the land. I encouraged others at the retreat to build and educate about one-rock dams in their **community**. By restoring New Mexico's **water pathways**, we can begin to bring back some of the enchantment that has disappeared in this beautiful state. I will continue my **path of commitment** towards New Mexico's water **conservation**."

Alvord Community School – Creative Conservation with some Character Building

"We are concerned about food waste in the school cafeteria. Our conservation project is to turn yucky old food into amazing clean compost for our greenhouse and gardens. We will use the compost in our seedlings to help us grow plants for our garden and other school gardens. Our project will also cut down the garbage our school throws in the landfill. We have a worm program with Ellen Heath, so this will be very good compost with worm poop, oops we mean, castings. Composting and mulching plants are the #1 way to conserve water in our climate.

We have a healthy breakfast with fruit, and a healthy lunch with farm-to-school vegetables, but the littler kids do not eat all their veggies. There is a lot of garbage.

The lunch ladies have told us they would help us compost, if we do the hard part (and the stinky part.) Fridays is the best day to start because it is

salad bar day, and there are a lot of vegetables going in the trash. Once we see how it goes on Fridays, we may have composting every day.

Right now our compost pile is by the hoop house, next to the school. It is made of straw bales. We have potatoes growing in it. We can put more straw bales on them. Then we could have more potatoes too.

Our plan has three parts:

- 1) Help the school sort compostable trash from non-compostable trash. Compostable trash includes vegetables and paper napkins but not meat or milk. We will research all the things that we can compost. We have a volunteer parent donating a wheeled garbage can or two. We will wheel them into the cafeteria on compost day. We will make a sign/ poster for the cans to let kids know what is compost and what is trash. This takes Community Spirit! And Consciousness about how our trash is not just trash - it is just a few weeks or months away from changing into fertilizer.
- 2) Commit to wheeling the compost outside and dumping it into the compost pile, then hosing out the can. This takes Courage and Teamwork!
- 3) Complete our amazing compost by turning it, sifting out the hard parts and adding our worm castings to make amazing dirt! And tell our families and friends so they can compost too!

We hope to win the conservation quest so we can build bigger and better composters!"

[For Santa Fe High School please visit the Pathway of Conservation Snippets Link to find the science students' and others' excellent ideas.](#)