

A-2 THE NEW MEXICAN Wednesday, October 7, 1992

Jemez bill dead for now, or is it?

By KATIE HICKOX
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Rep. Bill Richardson, D-N.M., tried and failed early Tuesday to get a House vote on legislation that would create a 57,000-acre Jemez National Recreation Area. The New Mexico delegation's effort to create the special conservation area in the Jemez Mountains has been thwarted by unrelated disputes in Congress, a dispirited Richardson said afterwards.

Rep. William Dannemeyer, R-Calif., refused procedural grounds to let Richardson bring a version of the Jemez bill to the floor of the House early Tuesday morning.

Dannemeyer has tried to nudge Democratic lawmakers in recent days to show his dissatisfaction with the majority party's policies.

"The Jemez (bill) became the victim to the clock and to the gridlock in Congress," Richardson said Tuesday. "I don't think it will be a problem passing the bill next year — but my hope is by that time the mountains are not damaged."

An Española mining company has been digging for

punice on taxpayer-owned land within the proposed recreation area. Richard Cook, owner of the Copar Punice Co., has filed with the federal government for title to some of the land and has sought to expand his mining operation in the Jemez Mountains.

After months of bickering, Richardson and Sen. Pete V. Domenici, R-N.M., agreed last month on legislation that would forbid any miners from gaining title to land within the 57,000-acre area.

The legislation, which would have allowed some timber cutting and hunting within the recreation area, has to be approved first by the Senate and then the House.

Despite Richardson's grim prediction, Domenici said Tuesday that the Jemez bill was alive and well and would likely squeak through Congress by Thursday to be signed into law by President Bush.

"I look forward to it passing," Domenici said. "There's plenty of time to get it down in the Senate, and then it's going to go in the House."

Domenici said he was keeping his fingers crossed that the legislation would not get



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tant on any other legislation. The Senate will meet to consider the energy strategy on Thursday, while the House will conduct no recorded votes on that day.

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New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato's filibuster of the tax bill on Monday and Tuesday precluded the Senate from

acting on any other legislation. The Senate will meet to consider the energy strategy on Thursday, while the House will conduct no recorded votes on that day.

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AGUILAR

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shortly after being hired for the post. He said at the time he resigned due to a difference of opinion with school administrators about site-based management, the process that allows parents, students and teachers a voice in the management of their schools.

Aguilar returned to his post five days later, after meeting with Superintendent of Schools Amos Melendez and members of the Santa Fe Board of Education.

At the time, Aguilar said all differences had been worked out and that he was happy to stay in the Santa Fe Public Schools system.

Now Aguilar says that situation may be coming back to haunt him.

"I think this has to do with me and what I may have done in the past," he said. "I think they're after Pete Aguilar, period. I'm saying that I think I made permanent enemies in central office from what I did last spring."

Nonetheless, Aguilar said he intends to gain satisfaction through the grievance process or resign.

Several faculty members said they were happy to see Aguilar sticking up for his beliefs, but were concerned that he would be fired.

"I think it's great," said Orlando Baca, a business teacher at Santa Fe High. "I think we're doing some really good things at Santa Fe High School. People up there are getting used to the idea that we can take risks and so on and we need to have somebody like Pete around who is going to protect our rights to

site-based management. I support him one hundred percent, as I know the rest of the staff does."

Baca said if Aguilar lost his job, pandemonium would result at the school, and art teacher Sam Blea agreed.

"I think there'd be a big uproar," Blea said. "People have respect for him."

Superintendent Melendez said he was surprised by Aguilar's grievance.

"I had been seeing what I thought was a good relationship," Melendez said of Ortiz and Aguilar. "I had perceived them both as doing a good job."

Melendez said the process now will follow district policy, which calls for an employee with a grievance to meet with his or her immediate supervisor — which in this case is Ortiz — to attempt to resolve the problem.

Ortiz will have until Friday to respond in writing to Aguilar's grievance. If Aguilar still isn't satisfied, he then can pursue the grievance with Melendez.

If the problem can't be solved by the superintendent, it will go before the school board.

Melendez said no information about the results of the process will be public record.

Members of the school board were given copies of Aguilar's grievance at Tuesday's meeting.

School board member Lynda Kellahin said she hadn't had time to read it, but was pleased with Aguilar's performance as principal so far.

"I think Pete has done what I think we want to see all of our principals do, back their staffs," Kellahin said.

BALLOON

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balloon — once you're in the air — you just kind of float across.

"My father had told us how wonderful and beautiful the views were and they were, and more, but we gained a tremendous amount of respect for what a difficult thing, a 24-hour-a-day process it is. And it catches up with you," he said.

"It's a sleep deprivation thing of sorts. We probably didn't sleep more than three hours a night for the entire six days. It was a lot of work."

While in the air, Abruzzo said, "you're working with the currents, the weather systems, the nighttime cooling, the daytime heating."

"You're constantly making adjustments as the time. It doesn't get there by accident or by luck. It gets there because you're piloting your balloon."

"You're out there, a particle in the weather system."

Living in a gondola about five feet wide, seven feet long, and seven and one-half feet high, the pilots also had to endure temperatures as low as 4 degrees Fahrenheit some nights.

"The entire surface of our gondola was coated with ice, and we had every piece of

clothing we brought on," Abruzzo said.

Though they made it all the way to Africa, the American team didn't win the race because the finish line was any paved road in Europe, but there was more to the race for Abruzzo and company than just winning.

"Our philosophy was to work around the weather that was out there," said Abruzzo. "Also, we were counting on a left turn to the north, but that didn't develop as much as we thought it would. Our turn to the left ended up being more delayed."

So they wound up landing 45 miles east of Casablanca in Morocco.

But we were happy with our treatise we flew six days without experiencing any precipitation," Abruzzo said. "We couldn't be happier with the way we ran it. Of course, we congratulate the Belgians on their win."

The Belgian team crossed a road in Spain after 114 hours, 27 minutes aloft.

"The Germans were the first to ditch," Abruzzo said. "They were forced down by heavy icing and rain and very violent thunderstorm activity east of Newfoundland on the third

day."

The Dutch team also had to ditch, he said.

"They were trying to make it to Europe and they got caught in a strong developing low in the Bay of Biscay (just east of France) and ditched within 60 miles of Land's End, England. It's the most southern tip of England."

The British team landed in Portugal a day after the Belgians landed, and the Americans, well, the Americans had an agenda of their own.

Abruzzo and Bradley tried to win the race, but from the very beginning they spoke about breaking the world endurance record that Richard's father had shared.

"And we were really in tune with that more than any of the other teams," Abruzzo said.

At the record-breaking moment, Abruzzo said, "We were both up top sitting outside the hatch and we counted down as the time came up and had a little celebration, just talked about it, a couple of handshakes and hugs, it was a very emotional moment."

"It brought tears to my eyes, to come so far and not only did we break the record, we could also see Casablanca, so we

knew we were going to make land. It was about 3:30 in the morning, local time."

After their African landfall, Abruzzo and Bradley wanted to continue to Russia, but fate intervened in the form of a failed generator and they had to land.

On landing in the desert at 7:45 a.m. local time on Sept. 22, another adventure was just over the next sand dunes for the two Americans.

"We landed in a very rural area — kind of in the middle of nowhere — near some villages," Abruzzo said. "When we came down, it was just like culture shock, like, 'Wow, we're really in Africa.' We could see camels and little mud huts."

Eventually, hundreds of villagers welcomed the two pilots, including one who spoke "very broken English," Abruzzo said.

About two hours later, the Moroccan military arrived, complete with helicopters to transport Abruzzo, Bradley, and the balloon to Rabat, the capital city just north of Casablanca on the Atlantic coast.

"They were wonderful," Abruzzo said. "They took care of all the paperwork, since we arrived in unusual fashion."

WIPP

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Domenici said he and Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., are pushing Bryan and Senate leaders to let the WIPP bill squeak through on Thursday. Bryan so far has refused to budge.

The legislation was welcomed by New Mexico Democratic Gov. Bruce King, but eschewed by environmentalists in the state.

"Although the bill does not contain all of the impact money New Mexico had sought, it does provide adequate funds for the state to begin to make the road and safety improvements necessary," King said.

Environmentalists have opposed the bill because it does not mandate that the Department of Energy prove nuclear waste would be safe underground for 10,000 years before the government begins experiments.

King and DOE officials had hoped for a \$600 million package of aid to New Mexico to pay for the state's efforts to keep roads and citizens safe from the goods being transported to the repository.

If the Senate does not approve WIPP legislation by the time it adjourns, the legislation must be reintroduced to Congress next year. Congress tried and failed to pass a WIPP land transfer in 1988.

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The bill excludes Yucca Mountain, potentially a far more dangerous repository than WIPP, from any EPA standards on the safety of radioactive waste underground for 10,000 years.

Nevada senators also have delayed debate on a separate national energy strategy that contains provisions they claim weaken any future environmental regulation on Yucca Mountain.

Bryan said he and Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., will delay a Senate vote on the WIPP bill "as long as we possibly can."

"At a minimum, the people of Nevada deserve the same level of protection as the people of New Mexico," Bryan said. "We in Nevada come with no special 'Teflon' protection against radiation."

Yucca Mountain is hoped to be the final resting place for the nation's most lethal refuse — high-level radioactive waste from 11 nuclear power plants.

The WIPP bill passed by the House Tuesday forbids any high-level waste at the New Mexico repository.

The Senate and House have recessed until late today or early Thursday. Leaders of the two chambers hope to complete all pending business by Thursday.

LANL

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would cost. But he said that health assessments of Department of Energy facilities are typically complex and can take years to complete.

Charp said ATSDR plans to do health assessments of the 18 Department of Energy facilities now on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund Priorities List.

LANL is not on that list, but ATSDR is looking at the lab because of Richardson and Merrier's quest, Charp said.

said "a health assessment would be undertaken as soon as it was approved (by the agency)."

Last week ATSDR released a report saying that Acid Canyon does not contain high enough levels of plutonium to pose an immediate health hazard. The canyon in Los Alamos was once used by the lab as a dump for nuclear and other materials.

However, the report said more soil sampling is needed in the canyon. The report also said there is insufficient data

puted by Harry Otway, who is on LANL's Director Sigfried Hecker's staff. In an interview last week, Otway said that "all information on plutonium and other contaminants (in the canyon) has been provided" to ATSDR.

The report was requested last spring by Merclier, who believes the canyon poses a health hazard. Acid Canyon is open to the public.

In another report released last week, the state Health Department said the rates of thy-

roid further studies be conducted to determine the causes of those rates.

The report also said that brain cancer rates in the 1980s were higher than state and national averages, but not high enough to be cause for alarm. The report recommended that the brain cancer rate in Los Alamos be monitored in coming years.

Free!!!

Today's SPECIAL

Choice of soup or salad