

# The Colfax Gazette

Published in Cimarron, New Mexico

*Just a lot of people doing the best they can.*

Vol. II, No. 25

December 31, 2020

\$1.00

## RESTORING THE RIVER

On about this date four years ago a tanker truck carrying petroleum products overturned in icy conditions in Cimarron Canyon. The wreck released 1,100 gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel into a section of the river just below the catch and release fishing portion of the upper canyon. A 1.5 mile section of the river downstream was closed to the public for several months.

According to New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee Maggie Hart Stebbins, in a press release, "the spill killed fish and macroinvertebrates in the river and contaminated water, soils and sediments." The Office of the Natural Resources Trustee is a little-known state agency that was "created by statute to ensure that New Mexico's natural resources which have been injured by the release of hazardous substances are restored for the full benefit of New Mexicans." The spill of fuel in the Cimarron River meets this criteria.

The ONRT announced on December 23 that Texas-based Fronk Oil Company will pay \$150,000 for restoration projects on the river. These projects will be designed to improve "fish habitat, soil, water, and other natural resources injured, destroyed, or lost as a result of the fuel spill." In the press release Hart Stebbins thanked the leadership at Fronk Oil "for honoring the company's obliga-

tions following the accident and their willingness to work with us to reach a fair resolution to this case."

The attorney for Fronk Oil, Jerry D. Worsham II, has emphasized that the company immediately and fully cooperated with State and Federal authorities in responding to the accident. Todd Tatum, member of the Ute Park Volunteer Fire Department, confirmed this assertion. "Fronk sent in clean up crews right away." Mr. Worsham went on to say, "Fronk Oil regrets the accident and has taken seriously our corporate responsibility to make things right. Fronk incurred more than \$300,000 in clean up costs during the five month remediation effort."

The settlement funds will be used exclusively in the area of the spill. If the affected injured natural resources can not be replaced or restored, the funds will be used to acquire equivalent natural resources. The ONRT will accept public comment on the settlement plans from December 26, 2020, to February 1, 2021. Address comments to Ralph Gruebel, Office of New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee at [ralph.gruebel@state.nm.us](mailto:ralph.gruebel@state.nm.us) or at 121 Tijeras NE, Suite 1000, Albuquerque NM 87102. Refer to Fronk Oil Consent Decree.



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