

PASA DAY

◆ Desert Chorale, chamber music concerts

◆ Musical team behind ‘Eugene Onegin’

◆ Gauthier at She Rises Music Festival

◆ Review: ‘Return to Little House on Prairie’

INSIDE THIS WEEK’S PASATIEMPO

UNM coach Eck sees a lot of interest in football team

SPORTS, B-1

Man gets life sentence without parole after second conviction in 2018 killing

LOCAL & REGION, A-9

Report: Opioid funds spending slow, unclear

State auditor says half of local governments that have received lawsuit payments since 2023 haven’t used money

By Nicholas Gilmore
ngilmore@sfnewmexican.com

Millions of dollars have flowed to local governments across New Mexico in the last three years for addiction treatment and other measures to mitigate the state’s deadly, decades-long opioid epidemic.

Much of that funding remains unspent. Nearly half of the New Mexico cities and counties that have received lawsuit settlement payments from opioid makers and marketers since 2023 hadn’t reported any spending by the end of fiscal year 2025, the State Auditor’s Office says in a report.



Joseph Maestas

The agency’s Government Accountability Office examined financial reporting from the 33 counties and 12 municipalities that have received disbursements from the massive settlements with pharmaceutical companies, prescribers and pharmacies in multistate lawsuits — money

meant to help mitigate a drug crisis that continues to worsen in New Mexico. The agency found 58% of cities and 45% of counties had not reported any expenditures by June 30, 2025, according to a report released this week. The report states the findings indicate the implementation of opioid remediation activities “has proceeded unevenly across the state, and that funds intended for urgent public health interventions

Please see story on Page A-4

BLM pushes Chaco drilling change

Opponents blast agency’s short comment period on slashing buffer zone

By Cormac Dodd
cdodd@sfnewmexican.com

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management took another step this week to reopen federal lands surrounding the Chaco Culture National Historical Park to oil and gas drilling and other mineral extraction. The federal agency announced Wednesday it is seeking public comments on a planned environmental assessment for its proposal to revoke a 2023 order closing about 336,404 acres near Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico to future drilling and mining for 20 years. Such a reversal would eliminate a 10-mile buffer. The two-week public comment period will end July 29. The move comes after the BLM in late March held a weeklong public comment period on the proposal to shrink or ax the buffer zone. The new comment period on the planned environmental assessment suggests the proposal is moving forward. Environmentalists, preservationists and Indigenous leaders, as well as New Mexico’s congressional delegates, swiftly criticized Wednesday’s announcement as a next-step toward reopening the area to drilling. “We are being asked to accept the permanent loss of a landscape our ancestors built, walked, and prayed in, in exchange for fourteen wells,” Acoma Pueblo Gov. Charles Riley said in a statement. “This is not energy strategy.

Please see story on Page A-4

PRIMETIME ADDRESS

Trump has no proof of any vote tampering

President repeats old claims, accuses China of interfering

By Isaac Arnsdorf and Warren P. Strobel
The Washington Post

After almost six years of promises to imminently reveal smoking-gun proof of tampering with the 2020 election, President Donald Trump stopped short again Thursday. In a primetime presidential address that the White House and Republican allies said would present bombshell findings from an exhaustive reexamination of law enforcement and intelligence files, Trump never claimed to have any evidence of altered votes or compromised machines. Instead he described “vulnerabilities” in election infrastructure, without alleging that the weaknesses were exploited. “They’re vulnerable, and they’re easily compromised,” Trump said of electronic voting machines. “Our elections were left vulnerable to being rigged and stolen,” he added, using softer language than his usual insistence that the 2020 election was rigged and stolen. He accused China of an “illicit” acquisition of U.S. voter files including names, addresses, phone number and party affiliation — all of which is publicly available information. There is no evidence or intelligence that the Chinese government hacked or compromised state voter registration systems in 2020, two former senior U.S. officials said. In the process, Trump may have angered Chinese leaders whom he assiduously courted during a visit to Beijing in May. Trump did not mention several topics that allies had predicted he would discuss. He offered no updates on the federal investigations into 2020 voting records in Georgia and Arizona or recent FBI interviews with former election officials in Milwaukee. He did cite a Department of Homeland Security report that claimed officials had discovered a large number of noncitizens registered to vote in California and three other states. But the administration did not release evidence to back up that assertion. Past claims of noncitizen voting have often failed to stand up to scrutiny.

Please see story on Page A-8

Wildlife center soaring high with 40 years of animal care

Española facility holding open house; has plans for flight arena, new hospital



PHOTOS BY NATHAN BURTON/THE NEW MEXICAN

New Mexico Wildlife Center veterinarian Ashley Kramer, right, and wildlife rehabilitator Libby Bukovec examine a Cooper’s hawk on Thursday that suffered a gunshot wound. The education and rehabilitation center, which is celebrating its 40th year, houses about 150 animals.

By Elizabeth Anne Andrews
For The New Mexican

Black-footed ferrets Phoenix and Verga scurried down tubes in their habitat at the New Mexico Wildlife Center in Española while Anna Tobin fed them small, pink mice. The endangered ferrets are spending their retirement from a breeding program in Colorado teaching the center’s visitors about their species, which was declared extinct twice before a successful breeding program launched in 1981 brought them back from the brink. Now the ferrets are among 32 ambassador animals housed at the wildlife center, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary with major plans for expansion. For Tobin, the director of the center’s ambassador animal program, tending to the ferrets is a dream come true. “My two like things that I always dreamed about was meeting Jane Goodall and working with black-footed ferrets,” Tobin said. “They’re North America’s rarest mammal,



Echo, a sandhill crane, is fed seeds by the center’s Amanda Pressly.

and so to be able to work with them as an adult and then share them in a state that’s the third most biodiverse state in the United States is like the biggest gift in the world.” The center has treated tens of thousands of animals in its 40-year

Please see story on Page A-4

WILD ABOUT WILDLIFE

When: 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday
Where: New Mexico Wildlife Center, 19 Wheat St., Española
Details: Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for children over 3. Events include storytelling, animals and tours.
More information: newmexicowildlifecenter.org/events2



Your journey, powered by WE

THE MORE YOU BANK WITH US, THE MORE YOU EARN BACK.

Insured by NCUA

nusenda.org/membership