



## Rays are among 6 teams without World Series ring

SPORTS, 1B

# CARLSBAD CURRENT-ARGUS

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## Higby Hole monitored for potential spill

**Adrian Hedden** Carlsbad Current-Argus  
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW MEXICO

The State of New Mexico and a major oil and gas company continued to monitor the Higby Hole area about a week after a potential drilling mud spill was reported near the popular swimming and fishing area south of Loving.

On Monday, the operator reported the incident was "naturally occurring" and not related to extraction operations.

Kinder Morgan reported a disturbance in the nearby Black River during drilling operations on Oct. 9 and immediately shut down operations.

Spokeswoman Lexey Long said El Paso Natural Gas, a natural gas pipeline system owned by Kinder Morgan, began investigating the area for a potential spill on Oct. 8 after noticing sedimentation in the water while a contractor was

conducting a horizontal drill in the area. Long said Kinder Morgan determined after investigating the report that the sedimentation was naturally occurring and not drilling fluid.

"After a thorough investigation, the company determined that it did not have an inadvertent return into the river and the sediments observed were naturally occurring and not drilling fluid," Long said.

The National Response Center was notified and the New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department's (EMNRD) Oil Conservation Division (OCD) sent an inspector out to the area near Malaga in southern Eddy County.

EMNRD spokeswoman Susan Torres said the inspector reported no noticeable issues related to a spill, but the OCD issued an official letter to Kinder Mor-

gan requesting the company continue to monitor the area and report to the State.

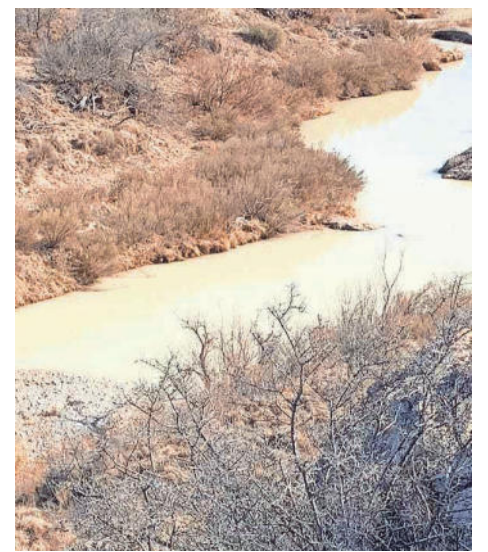
Torres said EMNRD will continue to monitor the situation in conjunction with other state regulators.

"At the time of inspection there were no noticeable issues, but the OCD issued an official letter to Kinder Morgan asking for additional data and we remain in contact with the company regarding the issue," she said. "We also continue to communicate with other state agencies to monitor the situation."

The New Mexico Environment Department received the initial report on Oct. 9 and alerted EMNRD.

Drilling mud is a fluid use for oil and gas drilling and can contain crude oil and other chemicals that could pose a threat to the environment if released.

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A portion of the Black River appears to be suffering from an industrial spill on Feb. 24 in Malaga. BERT RIOS

## Judge upholds jumping mouse protections



The New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse is a source of contention since it was named an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The ESA is in the process of being updated. COURTESY PHOTO/U.S. FOREST SERVICE

## Endangered New Mexico rodent dwells in meadows, along streams

**Adrian Hedden** Carlsbad Current-Argus  
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW MEXICO

A federal judge upheld protection for the habitat of an endangered mouse in New Mexico, dismissing a lawsuit brought by two ranching groups.

The New Mexico meadow jumping mouse historically dwells along streams in New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona.

It grows about seven to nine inches long, with its tail accounting for about half of its size.

The jumping mouse is also referred to as the "kangaroo mouse" in some parts of the southwest and leap up to two feet high.

It is nocturnal and hibernates for about nine months each year, consuming mostly plants and small fruits.

The long hibernation period of the mouse means it only has a short window in the summer to breed and gain weight to survive the winter, which requires habitats remain ideal when needed, providing tall, dense grass and forage found only along flowing streams.

**"Today's ruling will give this endangered species a fighting chance at survival."**

**Samantha Ruscavage-Barz**  
Managing attorney with the WildEarth Guardians

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the mouse's habitat began a sharp decline, read the court's decision, attributed to livestock grazing, drought and wildfires.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated 14,000 acres of land between the three states as "critical habitat" in 2016, restricting uses of the land and establishing requirements to maintain the areas for the jumping mouse's survival.

In 2018, the Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association and the Otero County Cattleman's Association sued the Fish and Wildlife Service seeking to overturn the protections in New Mexico.

The groups cited the economic harm the restrictions on the land could have spread across Colfax, Mora, Otero, San-

doval and Socorro counties.

The lawsuit argued such impacts to the local ranching industry were not fully considered when the Fish and Wildlife Service made it designation, and the ruling could affect the water and grazing rights of nearby ranchers.

U.S. District Judge James Browning for the District of New Mexico ruled that the Fish and Wildlife Service had properly considered the economic impact of the critical habitat designations and that protecting the habitat was imperative to restoring the mouse's population as required under its designation as an endangered species.

See PROTECTIONS, Page 5A



**Dale Janway**  
Mayor, City of Carlsbad

## Check out transitional housing fundraiser

It has been a tough year for many of our local nonprofits, many of whom have had to cancel or postpone their fundraising efforts.

The Carlsbad Transitional Housing and Homeless Shelter is holding an online auction through Oct. 25. Local crafter Larry Krueger has donated several pieces from his private collection, including pens and walking sticks. You can check them out here: <https://www.facebook.com/CTHHS88220>.

The auction ends at noon on Oct. 25. All proceeds from the auction will stay with CTHHS and assist with their mission of providing safe, clean and affordable housing to those in need. Thank you for finding ways to support this and other local nonprofits who have played an especially important role this year in helping out residents in need.

The upswing of positive COVID-19 cases continued in Eddy County and across the state throughout the weekend. There were 36 new positive cases announced on both Saturday and Friday, and an additional 13 announced on Sunday.

Sadly, there was also a COVID-19 related death of an Eddy County resident announced on Friday, making it the 17th so far. This death was a teenager and reported to be the youngest COVID-19 death to have taken place in New Mexico. This was a terrible tragedy, and we offer our condolences and prayers to family and friends of this young woman. Please continue to treat the threat presented by COVID-19 seriously by avoiding large gatherings and wearing a face covering when the situation demands it.

According to Bloomberg, Conoco-Phillips agreed to buy Concho Resources Inc. for about \$9.7 billion in stock. The combined company will certainly be one of the dominant operators of the area. It is the third major Permian purchase of the year. Chevron completed its acquisition of Noble Energy in October and Devon Energy announced its purchase of WPX Energy Inc. in September. Bloomberg notes

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### USA TODAY

Rallying the staff: President derides disease expert, slams polling data. **4A**

### Starting to feel like '88 for LA

It's an unfortunate time for people who despise Los Angeles sports teams. **1B**

### Weather

High 90° ■ Low 49°  
Sunny. Forecast, **6A**

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