Members of the TT from 1960 and 1961 reunited at Base Camp this summer. From the left: Ann Hamze, Linda Holman, Leah Mae Silversmith, Chris Stromme Schaefer, Irene Notah, and Carol Holliday Blew.
Note from the Director

Many times in recent months, I’ve described the 2011 summer as “robust” -- and indeed it was. We had more than 40 staff members, served 155 Trekkers, hosted 3 school groups, collaborated with a dozen visiting scholars, explored thousands of miles, made countless vehicle repairs, dodged several forest fires, abused many tents, grew hundreds of vegetables, and entertained over 200 guests at The 85th Reunion. But the most impressive quantity, the most important statistic from the 2011 season, was the infinite number of laughs. Somehow, this number always comes out on top. And that’s the Trek -- it’s the place where we learn how important, effective, rewarding, and fun it is give fully of ourselves. The pages in this newsletter are full of examples of this.

Sidsel and I are grateful for the opportunity to have lived such a Gulchy existence over the last 5 years and we’re excited to carry these new skills, wonderful memories, and eternal friendships with us when we move on next year. I will step down as Director before the start of the 2012 summer. With 1-year old Mette and 3-year old Else onboard, we’re eager to move closer to family given that all 4 of the girls’ grandparents still live in the same small town where we grew up -- it’s just too bad that town is 2,000 miles from Base Camp. But all those Trek laughs inspired us to move here in 2007 and they will surely bring us back again and again in the future.

As Executive Director, I’m honored to have stood in such impressive footsteps, serving such an outstanding mission with such an incredible community. Professionally, I’m proud of building many more local connections for the Gulch and increasing operating income by 25%. Personally, I’ll cherish even more my memories of playing music with friends on a sunset-colored Back Porch among the sounds of children after a full day of work and a life’s worth of laughs -- all in one day, one grand day outside in New Mexico.

- Mike Sullivan

Note from the Chair

As we enter our 86th year of expeditions in the West, it is important to take stock of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. More than 200 alumni, parents and friends gathered in early August this summer to commemorate Mr. Howie’s vision for Prairie Trek Expeditions. The celebration of the 85th anniversary provided a great look back at where we have been. We even had 4 alumni from the Turquoise Trail who celebrated their 50th reunion! Those of you who could not attend should plan to come to another reunion with your favorite group along the way.

I am happy to report the conclusion of another successful summer at the Gulch, with our groups reporting some outstanding programs, despite the forest fires which caused last-minute changes in many itineraries. But safety comes first, and Mike Sullivan and Jordan Stone were able to find new locations for the groups to investigate far from harm’s way. We are very grateful to the talented counselors and staff members who helped shape the expeditions this summer, making the program as fun and stimulating as the ones imagined and created by Hillis Howie. The Board also reports that we are on sound financial footing, as you can see from our balance sheet and income statement. Thanks to the continued support of our generous donors to the Foundation, we are able to keep the mission of the organization in our mind’s eye. With news of schools dropping recess to save money and filed trip budgets getting cut or eliminated, it is our goal, even in these challenging economic times, to take children outside and away from text messages and Facebook, and to enable them to explore the landscape and discover new things -- an experience that is becoming foreign to too many kids these days.

I also want to take this time to thank Mike Sullivan for his special guidance and leadership over the last five years. Mike and his wife, Sidsel, have been tireless stewards of the Gulch. The Sullivans, with a lot of personal family sacrifice, have helped nurture our summer programs in many unseen ways, including transforming their Albuquerque home into an office, hostel, dining hall, music center, and staging area for Gulch-related activities year round. They have also provided invaluable contact with communities throughout New Mexico and the Four Corners. Mike, gratefully, has offered to stay on in his capacity as Executive Director so that we can begin the search process and have his help training a replacement. Thank you, Mike and Sidsel, we know you and your family will stay in touch.

- Henry Hooper
The 85th Reunion at Cottonwood Gulch, Aug. 5th - 7th, 2011

Thank you to everyone for making the 85th Reunion a great success!
Go to www.cottonwoodgulch.org to view images from the event and listen to dozens of Trek stories collected in the Story Booth.
June 28th, 2011
Dear Log, Today was, quite literally, a day of sun and stars… at least more so than other days. After a delish breakfast we loaded the com (quite impressively) and headed out to La Jencia Ranch, a private restoration project of riparian forests ruined by cattle grazing. We planted lots of trees. The sun was brutally hot – energy sucking. We broke for lunch – then we planted more trees. Although using the cool hole-diggers was fun, I was glad when we were done planting trees. We did more serious chilling until our amazing dinner (Who knew mushrooms could be delicious?).

Emma Lloyd, MDT [on the left]

July 10th, 2011
This day began with us at the far outpost. After packing up camp, we drove down to Basecamp to take care of some last minute things; we sat down at the Cottonwoods circle while Krista made a swing from a log and some ropes and the rest of us wrote letters and painted. After that we departed Basecamp for another ten day loop. Most of us had a nice nap and listened to the Dixie Chicks, however our napping did not seem to make our moods better. After setting up camp we all found ourselves all in one tent in rather bad moods. This went on for a while with lots of whining for food and boys at rather loud volumes in a relatively small tent. Good bonding. After banging my head repeatedly into Sophie’s back for a while, we were told to get out of the tent and Ellen brought us chips and salsa (there was rejoicing). After animalistically diving at the food and not coming up for air until all the salsa was done, we were finally content. However, soon after a mysterious van entered our campsite. Tasha Fierce ironically said, “I can’t believe no one’s said OMG it’s the PT yet”. Well, it turns out it WAS the PT. We were quite overwhelmed. There was lots of throwing things and general shouting until we were finally allowed to see the PT swoon (just kidding). When we finally went over to talk to the boys we made a large clumpy circle and proceeded to stare awkwardly at each other. “How much does a penguin weigh?” “ Enough to break the ice.” –Krista Marx. Original. But I digress; many people made new friendships and had a lot of fun. I was also informed by the PT that my brother was a “bro”. We then had a large campfire which was energetic and funny. (We are much better singers than the PT). BYE LOG!

Morgan Stein, TT [fourth from the left]

July 25th, 2011
Today I woke up kind of early with a stomachache. After some cran-razz juice I had a Tums, or is it a Tum? I am not sure since Tums sounds plural. After breakfast we split into two groups of ten. The first group (I wasn’t in it) set off first, at about 8:30 and my team left at about 9:00. And after three miles, we stopped for lunch. When I got really sweaty, even if I was super tired, I didn’t like to stop because I could actually smell myself and it wasn’t that pleasant! When our group met up with the other one, it began to downpour so we had to set up our tent in the rain and my sleeping pad got soaked (ugh). It ended up raining for like three hours and I slept most of the time. We had spaghetti for dinner and it took about an hour and a half to find good trees to hang our bear bags but it was really fun! At night it is super funny because my tent friends would tell funny stories about the day and we would laugh so hard for about 30 minutes until we would pass out (not really but it seemed like we would).

Bailey Fink, WCT1 [reclining on the far right]
July 14th, 2011
Today is the first day in the quarry. I chose to go prospecting and from the first moment I was amazed and I could not stop smiling. As we walked, Axle pointed out bone pieces and petrified wood. While we searched, Peter and I spotted an area and as I walked around searching I spotted three possible bones and Axle came and took a look. He said it looked like a jaw bone. We tried to find a source but we were unable to. Then Peter found several ribs and possibly some vertebra. We went and saw an Ankylosaur skull as it was being excavated. As I looked upon the beauty of the past I realized that there was no doubt that I would continue doing this as I grow up. Everything about today was truly magical. I truly enjoyed everything that I learned. After lunch we got a chance to excavate a bit. Working with hammers and pickaxes and brushes, we chipped away at the cliff side. Everything was hard but I had no idea I would enjoy it so much. Every chip brought me closer to the past and I loved the way it felt. By the end of the day as I walked towards the van all I could think is I can’t wait for tomorrow. PS. My jawbone turned out to be the frill of a pentaceratops!

Kyla Renee Majors, Paleo Trek [standing at the far right]
UVM Grad Students get their Boots Dusty in New Mexico

Almost two years in the making, University of Vermont (UVM) graduate students completed their summer field class in August in the Zuni mountains of west-central New Mexico. The field class was the result of a collaboration between the Forest Guild and UVM Professors Bill Keaton and Austin Troy to give their students first-hand experience and research opportunities in a week-long immersion into forest restoration and the related silviculture, biomass, environmental group perspectives, multiple jurisdiction approaches, and Tribal issues. The class familiarized themselves with the ecology and history of the Southwest’s frequent-fire forests, the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) in New Mexico, and the nation-wide Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. Their group research efforts investigated and produced reports covering woody biomass for energy, a GIS-based approach to forest restoration site-suitability, the role of multi-stakeholder processes in forest management on public lands, and an analysis of fuels reduction strategies for the Zuni Mountain Landscape restoration project.

The field week began on the porch of the Cottonwood Gulch mess hall where I gave a brief talk illustrated by actual fire-scarred tree "cookies" from the Southwest. These specimens, some of which date back 500 years or more, have easily identifiable fire scars which serve as foundational evidence for the frequent fire regimes that existed in ponderosa pine forests prior to large-scale European settlement. I then led the class on a hike across several vegetation zones on Cottonwood Gulch’s property where the class, none of whom had experience with these forests, were introduced to their characteristics and ecology. We cored several trees to age the forests and even attempted to demystify the forest history of the ponderosa pine and piñon-juniper ecotone...

Looking back almost two months after the class, I am still impressed with the caliber of UVM students, their observations during the field week, and the analyses in their reports. I hope this class is something we can convene again and perhaps even invite graduate students from other universities.

This article was originally published in the Forest Guild newsletter (Sept., 2011). To save space here, we removed text describing the group’s visit to Ramah and El Malpais, as well as to a couple of forest restoration businesses in the area. Please contact the Gulch office if you wish to read the full article. The author, Eytan Krasilovsky, served as Resident Naturalist at The Gulch in 2005 and he is now the Community Forestry / Model Forest Coordinator with the Forest Guild, based in Santa Fe. Eytan returns to Base Camp for a few days every summer to involve Trekkers in his ongoing forestry work in the Zuni Mountains. Eytan is pictured in the front of the above photo on the left. Cabin 4 sits beyond.
This was the second summer that I participated in our exchange program with Cottonwood Gulch. In July, I spent almost a full week at Base Camp with a group of three students from the Camino de Paz School and Farm, where I have been teaching for the last few years. Camino de Paz is a Montessori-based middle school program located on a 10-acre farm in Santa Cruz, NM. The students participate in all aspects of farm life, from growing vegetables and raising animals, to selling produce and managing their business. Our summer trip to Cottonwood Gulch enables our students to share their farming skills with kids from around the country and in exchange, they get participate in everything that “The Gulch” has to offer. This summer we offered three cottonwoods activities: traditional felt making with wool, cheese making, and chicken butchering. We also helped the garden during our free time. The students each took turns leading an activity. Ninth grader Sarah Gonzales led the felting workshop where we processed raw wool by picking it and carding it, producing some beautiful hand-felted hats, pillows, and bags. Seventh grader Ben Hanna led a cheese-making class using goat milk which we brought from our new dairy facility at Camino de Paz. The mozzarella and chèvre cheese were used in dinners in the Mess Hall. Lastly, we processed about 15 chickens for the 85th Reunion. Seventh grader Reyes Mason-Muller led the butchering process, a first for many kids. Thinking back, she says, “I think everyone had a good time and learned something, except for the kids who got nauseous!” As we were plucking chickens, an adult stopped and asked a Trekker if he was enjoying the butchering process. “Well,” he replied hesitatingly, giving me a sideways glance, “not really. But I like eating chicken, so I guess it’s a good experience.” We all laughed, but that sentiment is precisely what we hope to pass on to young people - the connection between themselves and the food that they eat every day.

This connection is most evident in the garden and hoop house at Base Camp. It is exciting to see how many of the crops are being used in the Gulch kitchen, rather than coming out of #10 cans. And it’s especially important that Trekkers are working to make this happen. My students and I also helped to do plant cover crops, tie tomatoes, and pull weeds. Of course, we also took part in eating the delicious food!

When we weren’t teaching farm skills, we had the opportunity to participate in life at Base Camp. We climbed on the bouldering wall, enjoyed a terrific (and scary!) hike through the slot canyon near Gallup, and even took a scuba diving lesson in the Gulch pool. This was the first time that any diving has ever taken place at Cottonwood Gulch so we felt very lucky! In general, the students were most impressed with the traditions that Cottonwood Gulch carries on. It was fun learning the songs and games, horse’n gogging for seconds, and getting to be bond with a group of like-minded people. For us, it is neat to see how other people, especially young people, are living in such a responsible, sustainable fashion – and there are many examples of this at The Gulch. From composting toilets to water catchments, we came away with a lot of ideas on how to improve our farm’s systems.

It is exciting for us to share our skills with Cottonwood Gulch and extend Camino de Paz’s reach in educating young people about traditional farming skills and sustainability. As seventh grade student Ben Hanna puts it, “I think that sharing what we know and passing it on to other people is a great thing to do and something that everyone should be doing. It was a really fun week.”

Below is a list of people who received special honors from the Board Chair at Final Campfire during the 85th Reunion. These “Nature Leaders” have been pillars of strength and sustainability for the Foundation for many years, guaranteeing our success and inspiring others to give back to The Gulch in every way they can.

Larry Barker
Seth Battis
Monty Billings
John Bloch
The Cloud Family
Vergil and Frances Ford
Jameson French
Martin and Julie Heinrich
Tom and Irene Henio
Jimmy Herman
Joe and Madeleine Herrera
Hillis Howie, Jr
Lucy Kluckhohn Jones
Chet Kubit
Rick Madden
Gracie Ramirez
Ken and Selena Seowtewa
Wenda Trevathan
Mark Udall
Jeff and Courtney Zemsky
Sign up online for our 2012 Expeditions at www.cottonwoodgulch.org

### Summer 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expedition</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outfit Expedition, Session 1</td>
<td>6/23 - 7/8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outfit Expedition, Session 2</td>
<td>7/14 - 7/29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wild Country Trek, Session 1</td>
<td>6/25 - 7/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Country Trek, Session 2</td>
<td>7/17 - 8/5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turquoise Trail</td>
<td>6/25 - 7/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairie Trek</td>
<td>6/25 - 7/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trek Institute</td>
<td>6/25 - 7/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paleontology Trek</td>
<td>7/21 - 7/29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Trek</td>
<td>7/29 - 8/5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain Desert Trek</td>
<td>6/25 - 8/5</td>
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*Members of the 2011 TT: Morgan Stein, Nina Overgaard, and Grace Brown*