Reflecting on our Past to Envision our Future
by Kris Salisbury

Edward Abbey would be proud. That’s what I say when people asked me about my experience in Patagonia this winter. At least, that is one of the things I say. I also reflect on the rugged beauty, the diversity of landscapes and ecosystems, the strange feeling of the sun never really setting, and the crowds, oh the crowds. Seven years ago, I’ve been told, Torres Del Paine, one of Chile’s renowned national parks, was quiet and peaceful. There is only one road to enter the park, but it doesn’t really go into or through the park. I like to imagine that Abbey would have approved because to enter this park you must, quite literally, use your feet. One must ‘walk’ in order to wander among the giant monoliths for which the park is named. To see the breadth of Glacier Grey, the least saddening and most majestic glacier I have ever witnessed up close and personal, a glacier that changes the temperature of the wind by 10% of degrees and extends well beyond the distance that the eye can see, you must ‘walk’ and not only walk, but backpack.

So yes, in my way of thinking, the park is doing something right by not allowing roads to be built into and through the park, and notably, they limit exploration to one well worn 24” wide by 120 km long loop trail around the perimeter of the park with 2 side trails into the valleys within the towers. That’s it, unless you are a climber or mountaineer off trail. That’s the good news of the park’s management. I found myself thinking about this in relationship to our Gulch history, our current situation and our future. As I walked awe of my natural surroundings, I was reminded of how inspirational our program is for young people. As I made camp each night, I strengthened my resolve to continue looking at ways to balance the growth of our programming with the intentional visioning of our space and our practices. When I travel abroad I gain so much, and this trip was no different. I returned to the Southwest with new ideas, reinvigorated passion, and a reminder of our impact as humans within the ecosystem of which we play a large part.

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This last year has been about reflecting on 89 years of innovative programming and inspirational history while looking at ways to be relevant in this very different era. You, our alumni, have offered me a wonderful perspective about what is missing in the world, a gap which they hope the Gulch can fill. I borrow a concept that originated with the Iroquois Confederacy and has been adopted by many governments and organizations since: the precautionary principle, in which we make decisions about the future with the next seven generations in mind.

It is consistently clear that the Gulch is as relevant to this generation as it has been to previous ones. We owe it to future trekkers and the land we steward to find the path that allows us to both grow and be mindful of our impact. To that end, with much discussion and deliberation, we have crafted a plan to build our capacity, improve our infrastructure, and care for our land in the ‘now’ as we prepare and lay the foundation for the ‘future’. Please take a look at the centerfold, reflect on the story that the Gulch enabled for you and help support us in this endeavor. We hear often from trekkers, parents and teachers how thankful they are that a program like ours exists to fill a gap that seems to widen each year. This sentiment motivates us to continue working toward our mission. Get involved and lend your support! There is great work to be done to achieve these goals and we need you! Trek On,
Dear Alumni, Parents and Friends of the Gulch,

The Board of the Cottonwood Gulch has been working on some unglamorous but important projects for our expeditions: refreshing our by-laws, updating our status with the state and the IRS, auditing our books, restoring archives, digitizing our artifacts, and planning for our future. I want to give particular thanks to Dave Greenberg, Kris Salisbury and Beth Williams-Breault for their work on our behalf. They have helped us immensely in the effort to set the right direction for our organization.

As to the “audit,” for the past few decades we have been able to perform what is called a “financial review of our books and records.” However, the state of New Mexico suggests that nonprofits support their best practices by providing an annual audit. Going forward, therefore, in addition to our Federal Form 990, we will be auditing our financial records. Also, at the recommendation of the Attorney General in the state of New Mexico, we have decided to forgo the use of the term “Foundation” and revert to “Expeditions,” a term that has long been used in our publications. (We will put the term foundation in the files, until we establish an independent grant-making entity separate and apart from our Expeditions.) Our official title is now Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions, as we have been called for many years. We will continue to sponsor treks throughout the American Southwest.

I want to emphasize a specific “shout out” to our past Executive Directors, particularly Martin Heinrich, Jeff Zemsky and Mike Sullivan, who saw the need to create school groups and outside user groups as part of the Gulch’s mission. Today, as continued by Executive Director Kris Salisbury, the school groups have become a critical component of what we do. Last year, for example, we had a near-record 156 participants in our summer programs and a record 1,013 participants in our school year programs. The sum of these great efforts totaled over 6,000 trekker user days.

Our success and growth emphasize a real need in the world to fill the deficit in outdoor education, so eloquently espoused by Richard Louv in his writings. If you have not read his manifesto, *Last Child in the Woods*, be sure to put it on your reading list; it will change you, as it has so many others. We have a mission, in part, to inspire children who are inside fidgeting with their smart phones to wander beyond four walls into the wonder that is the outdoors.

If you know of a child who could benefit from our summer program, change a life and have him or her or their parents contact us on our website: www.cottonwoodgulch.org

Sincerely yours,

Henry E. Hooper
Chair, Cottonwood Gulch Board of Directors

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Join us for

Rendezvous 2015

First Rendezvous: July 4th
Navajo Picnic: July 18th
Second Rendezvous: July 25th

As always, our Rendezvous celebrations are open to all former trekkers, staff, and their friends and family. Send us a note if you can make it and we’ll make sure there is an SS cup and a spoon ready for your arrival.

If you can make it to Rendezvous, or if you plan to visit the Gulch any time this summer, email us your plans. We look forward to seeing you.

info@cottonwoodgulch.org
A lot of people ask why our school programs are so important to achieving our mission of promoting personal growth, scientific, historic, and cultural discovery as well as a knowledgeable environmental ethic. At the Gulch, we believe that getting kids outside creates some of the most powerful memories and experiences in their lives. If we can tie those moments to what they are learning in traditional education settings, their learning will be even deeper, and their understanding even greater.

Our society today often struggles with a lack of physical activity, a lack of play in the outdoors, and a lack of opportunity for young people to immerse themselves in a forest, a stream, the hoodoos, and all of the natural wonders of the world. According to The Outdoor Foundation, youth participation in outdoor recreation has declined in all age categories among both boys and girls since 2006. A Nature Conservancy study showed that children who have had at least one meaningful experience in nature prefer to spend time outside, express concern over environmental issues, and express an interest in studying the environment. According to a report in BioScience, 83% of children said they enjoy learning about nature, and 70% of parents said they were concerned their children spent too much time indoors and didn’t know enough about the natural world.

With these facts in mind, our programs supplement classroom learning and make it come alive in an outdoor laboratory. By engaging students with the physical world, we are able to push their learning beyond what they will gain from school alone. We enable them to touch, feel, smell, and even taste what they’re learning about.

In a trip this past winter, a second grade student asked “What’s that?” and pointed to a pile of bear scat. The scat was a unique color, reddish, with seeds throughout. Over the next twenty minutes about ten students, one member of our staff, and one member of school staff, talked about what the scat looked like, how much of it there was, and where it was found. Then, we talked about what kind of animal it probably came from, and what that animal ate that turned it the unique color it was. We showed the kids the inside of a cactus flower, which was the same color as the scat, and had the same seed pods inside of it. Seeing the look on a second grader’s face when she realizes that the scat she saw earlier and the cactus flower she’s looking at now are the same thing is a wonderful moment, and no doubt a “lesson” that her young mind won’t easily forget.

We are opportunistic instructors who believe in opportunistic learning. We bring students into amazing places, into the wilderness, and start showing them what the world has to offer, and then let them guide us to their learning.

Whether it’s exploring a sandstone canyon, picking at some scat to find out who left it and when, or watching a hawk bank left on an updraft, our school programs tie science education, wilderness adventure, and cultural arts together in a meaningful way that enhances our students’ classroom experience. In the past year, we’ve expanded our school programs by nearly 30%. This means that more classrooms and students are having the opportunity to get outside, and to explore the great wilderness of the Southwest.

If you’re an educator, administrator, student, or parent interested in planning a Cottonwood Gulch expedition with your school, please contact Matt Baker-White, our school groups coordinator, at matt@cottonwoodgulch.org.
2015 Spring Expedition Calendar

January 29  The Montessori Middle School (TMMS)  Albuquerque
TBD  East San Jose Elementary  Albuquerque
March 30-April 4  University of Delaware  Newark, DE
April 4-11  Zuni Youth Enrichment Program  Zuni Pueblo, NM
April 12  SheJumps Youth Climbing Day  Albuquerque
April 14-16  Van Buren Middle School  Albuquerque
April 16-18  Sidney Gutierrez Middle School  Roswell, NM
April 17  Wounded Warrior Project  Albuquerque
April 19-23  Wounded Warrior Project  Albuquerque
April 24-26  Del Norte High School  Albuquerque
April 29-30  South Valley Prep  Albuquerque
May 1-2  Teach for America  Gallup, NM
May 5-6  Stagecoach Elementary  Gallup, NM
May 5-8  TMMS 7th  Albuquerque
May 8  Montessori of the Rio Grande  Albuquerque
May 7-10  Great Old Broads for Wilderness  Albuquerque
May 11-13  J. Paul Taylor Academy  Las Cruces, NM
May 12-15  Escuela del Sol Sr. Elementary  Albuquerque
May 13-15  Escuela del Sol Jr. Elementary  Albuquerque
May 18-21  Rio Grande School  Santa Fe, NM
May 18-20  Mountain Mahogany  Albuquerque
May 18-26  East Mountain High School  Albuquerque
May 20-22  TMMS 6th  Albuquerque
May 23-24  Amigos group at Base Camp  Albuquerque
May 26-28  YES Prep  Houston, TX
June 1  Summer Staff arrive

Our new Albuquerque Headquarters

We refer to it as Urban Base Camp, or the Albuquerque Headquarters, or simply the 4th Street Office. Since we purchased it last year, we have been rehabilitating the property's two adobe buildings and landscaping the 1/3-acre grounds. For those of us who run the Gulch from Albuquerque during the fall, winter, and spring, the benefits of this new property are immense:

• Newly renovated and expanded office
• Bunkhouse for spring and fall staff
• Gear storage
• Vehicle parking
• Expanded opportunities for year-round programming
• Meeting space
• Prominent Albuquerque presence
• Outdoor space for gear preparation (especially important for school groups leaving from Albuquerque!)

If you’re in the neighborhood, stop by! You could even lend a hand—everything is still a work in progress.

9223 4th St NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114
Summer Treks 2015

The desert is calling. Don’t miss the adventure.

This time of year many of our summer treks begin to fill. Over 120 trekkers have signed up for a summer expedition so far, but there are still a few open spots. The trek will challenge you physically, it will challenge you mentally, and you’ll return home with new friends, new skills, and, most importantly, renewed confidence and curiosity. The Gulch is not for everyone, but if you embrace the challenge, it could change your life. We hope you can join us.

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Featured Treks
In addition to our classic treks--the PT, TT, WCT, and MDT--these treks offer the Gulch experience with a unique twist.

Family Trek 2015, Two Sessions!
The Family Trek provides a stellar opportunity for families to hike, camp, eat, and play together in the beautiful landscapes of New Mexico. At a time when many families are often too busy to play in a creek together, this trek is a welcome opportunity to strengthen family ties while spending a week together outside.

Session 1: June 20-27
Session 2: July 5-12

The first session of Family Trek will be led by Nate and Heather Mylin, parents and veteran staff members from Indianapolis. Lucy Kluckhohn Jones, our longtime Family Trek matriarch, will lead the second session.

Outfit Expedition
Do you have a child (or you are a child) aged 10 to 12 who likes hiking, science, art, archaeology, rock climbing, camping--in short, someone who likes spending time outside? The Outfit may be for you! No outdoor experience is required, only a spirit of curiosity about the world outside your home and outside your hometown. While novices are welcome, the Outfit will challenge all 10-12 year olds, even if they are seasoned outdoor explorers.

Session 1: June 21-July 6
Session 2: July 12-27

For more information, or to find out if your child is a good fit for this trek, give us a call: 505-248-0563.

Farm, Adventure, Build Trek
Are you passionate about how to make our society more sustainable? This trek is a synthesis of programs that we have been perfecting for years. You can look at it as a “sustainability trek” that includes, like all our treks, a bit of adventure. Young farmers can learn to grow food in the desert, while aspiring builders will mold local materials to create a natural structure with their own hands. You’ll also have a chance to go hiking and rock climbing along the way.

July 12-August 1

If you’re curious about sustainability issues--especially farming and natural building--this trek is for you. Bring along your adventurous side.

Paleontology Trek
Love dinosaurs, fossils, geology? This is your trek. We provide a unique opportunity for 15-18 year olds to learn the ins and outs of paleontology: prospecting for bones in the field, excavation techniques, and laboratory work to preserve and study bones like a real paleontologist. In fact, you’ll be working alongside a real paleontologist: Dr. Axel Hungerbuehler of Mesalands College in Tucumcari, NM will lead the way.

July 12-August 1

If you are an aspiring paleontologist, or a dinosaur lover who wants to see what this work is like, you’ll want to join this trek.
Envisioning our Future

As we approach our 90th year, we hear from our community that we are even more relevant to today’s youth than we were in times past. Our innovative and unique approach continues to inspire and engage just like it did 89 years ago. The difference is that we now live in a different world with different challenges. The land that has been our home for 80 years is aging and struggling with drought. Our buildings and infrastructure require upgrades and additions to meet our current needs and land management best practices. And, of course, as we respond to the heightened demand to provide meaningful outdoor experiences to a larger number of trekkers and schools, our season has expanded into an 8 month calendar.

Don’t worry, we are not losing sight of our philosophy and the importance of small, intimate programs. The Prairie Trek and Turquoise Trail look much like they did 40, 50, or 89 years ago. Our educational model continues to meet our mission. As we respond to the changing world around us, we keep an ever-present eye to our history and what makes the Gulch special as we envision our future.

Here is our plan

Forest Health

We are blessed with a 540-acre property that is mostly covered in forests of ponderosa, pinon, oak, juniper, and cottonwood trees. However, before we purchased the property in 1934, much of the forest was heavily and unsustainably logged. Moreover, recent drought has put our forests under continued stress. The land is still recovering.

For the last 20 years we have been thinning the forest to promote tree health, reduce wildfire risk, and encourage understory growth. In short, we are trying to restore health to the land we call home.

Proposed Mess Hall Expansion & QM Shack Upgrade

Any recent staff member will tell you that storing gear, repairing gear, and loading gear into our coms is a challenging process. Our plan, to improve efficiency and reduce congestion in our kitchen/pantry, is to build an extension to the mess hall, rendered here by Lezle Williams (architectural plans forthcoming). The new facility will include garage bays for vehicle loading and repair, an expanded kitchen with a walk-in refrigerator, a “Chet Kubit” workshop area, and much needed work space for our road cooks.

The plan also calls for a second story bunkhouse, which could house a small group in the colder months when the days are still pleasant but the nights are occasionally frigid. A warm place to sleep, in the style of all Gulch buildings, would allow us to spread our school groups out over a longer season and give more trekkers the opportunity to experience the Gulch at different times of year.

In Progress!
Envisioning our Future

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Our New Albuquerque Office

For years, directors ran the Gulch out of a home garage and later a one-room office in Albuquerque. As our school groups began to blossom several years ago, we recognized that our space had become far too small. We are now leading expeditions for a majority of the year, which requires more staff, more planning space, and more gear. After conducting a needs assessment, we moved forward with the purchase of a 1/3-acre property on the outskirts of Albuquerque. It needed much work.

The new property features a 1,600-square-foot office (pictured above, under renovation), a bunkhouse for seasonal staff, and plenty of outdoor space with room to pitch a few tents. After a fair amount of renovation, this facility is already allowing us to run our school programs more effectively, and with it the Gulch now has a prominent presence in Albuquerque. If you're in town, come on by north 4th Street to take a look.

Base Camp Pavilion

As many of you may have experienced, a thunderstorm during Rendezvous celebrations, with 150 or more people at Base Camp, can make for a challenging and potentially dangerous scenario. Even when the weather is pleasant, elder members of the Gulch community have difficulty traversing the trail to our current campfire circle for evening events.

To meet these needs, and others, we have envisioned a large gathering pavilion. This project will give us a covered outdoor space capable of seating over 175 at Rendezvous campfires, where everyone can gather together and stay dry.
Hiya!

I was on Van Sickle's Group I Trek in 1964, & Ostrom's Group III in '65. Fine adventures & indelible memories!

I primarily write because I am seeking a photograph of a man who lived in the ghost town of Old Ophir, which is near Telluride in the San Juan Mts. of SW Colorado, Jimmy Noyes. He was known as the Mayor of Old Ophir. I met him there in 1964. He was accompanied by his “daughter,” Avis Pentico, when he hiked up the hill to our Baker-Tent Camp near the Old Ophir Cemetery (incidentally, where Jimmy was buried in 1967). I do not know how many years the Trek came to Old Ophir, but 1964 wasn't the first time, and Jimmy was an old hand and was expecting us.

Anyway, a small group of the boys, myself included, held the plate for Jimmy as he scooped his dinner with his good arm (he’d a stroke), and he told us stories, stories that lit-my-fire & set me on my life's pathway: perhaps that sounds overly dramatic, but 'tis true.

I learned in 1967 from another old miner, over at Camp Bird near Ouray, that Jimmy Noyes had gone into a convalescent facility that year, and bet he'd pass on soon, which I confirmed upon my first return to Old Ophir in 1970 & finding his grave. I was doing field research for a Professor on the Navajo Res, driving every dirt road west of the White Mts & collecting data on architectural house-types: Stephen Jett wrote the book, Navajo Architecture, compiling my data & photos, and those of several others.

I returned to Old Ophir again, several times, including in 1975, when I was a tour-guide for Lyn Ottenger in Moab (also a major Trekkker character!), and met some of the locals, including Ray & Vera Belsie (they lived at the Post Office, and Vera ran the RGS Depot at the Ophir Loop while Ray was away in WWII). I met them again in 1981, and they told me that the lady that Jimmy Noyes was with that evening in 1964 was still alive, and living in Grand Junction.

Well, long story short, I looked up Avis Pentico, and we'd some shining times, good stories too, some about Jimmy Noyes, but mostly about her. They (them's that knows) say, as she also did claim, that John Wayne came to visit her in her cabin in Old Ophir while making True Grit, and they got amply intoxicated. She was a pistol. I was called to the hospital the night she died, was the last one to see her, talked her anxiety away and put a smile on her face, telling her Jimmy's as well as her stories back, & that she was going home. Then she drifted off & passed on.

Everyone from those days is gone, the Post Office shut down, rich folk's homes up Ophir valley near the Cemetery.

One day, about 4 years ago, I was walking down Main Street here in Grand Junction, decided to visit an antique store that I'd not rummaged in awhile, & while crossing the street, noticed a large framed studio photo (16”x20”) in the window, & me jaw did drop as I recognized Avis. It's one hell of a photo, she's in her hardhat with an electric light, jacket & turtleneck sweater, hand on an old shovel, grinning & her eyes sparkling. Such a pistol! Her portrait proudly hangs in my law office.

And so, I am looking for a picture of Jimmy Noyes. There are a number of references to him on the Internet, but only one poor-quality picture from a 1958 newspaper article. There are also a few references to Avis. It's a long-shot, but there's no harm asking whether you have it in your Gulch library or, conversely, you might put an inquiry in the newsletter whether there's an old Trekkker or TT member who might have a photo.

Suffice to say, those two summers on the road with the Trek thoroughly transmogrified me into the man I became. I still carry my same rock pick, 3 chisels & streak plate from '64 whenever I'm out prowling in the San Juan Mts., the LaSal Mts. & in the canyon country nearby. It's been one fine adventure, and many thanks to Cottonwood Gulch, always.

Best wishes-
Roy K. Farber
roykfarber@gmail.com
Get Ready For Our  
 **90th Reunion!**  
 **August 2016**

Our 85th reunion celebration was a smashing success. We had around 200 attendees for a weekend of hiking, singing, storytelling, rekindling friendships, and a consistent air of enthusiasm for everything Gulch, past and present. The 90th reunion will be open to former trekkers, staff, and their friends and family. Look for details in the next newsletter, but for now, it’s probably best to block out the whole month of August 2016. We look forward to seeing you there.

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**Reptilian Inspiration**

*The Gulch has emboldened young scientists since the very first days of the Trek.*

*by Stephanie Gallo*

Stewart Springer was one of the first staff members to accompany Hillis Howie on the Trek. Springer is best known for his research and studies on shark behavior and classification. Throughout his lifetime, Springer named or classified over 35 species of sharks and other creatures. However, his interest in science and classification of species started with a certain lizard in the desert.

In 1927, at the age of 22, Springer was a staff member on the Prairie Trek when he identified and described a new species of lizard: *Cnemidophorus velox*, or the Plateau Striped Whiptail. He found out that this lizard is an asexual species; all lizards are female and reproduce by parthenogenesis, where development of the embryo happens without fertilization.

He was able to catch jackrabbits and other lizards but had trouble catching the Plateau Striped Whiptail for study. But with the help of his cousin, Max Barnes, and a .22 caliber rifle, he was able to catch the lizard by shooting it with a specially concocted “dust shot” cartridge.

We’d love to hear from any trekkers that were with him when he worked on this project.

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*The Plateau Striped Whiptail, scurrying among ponderosa needles.*
A good friend of mine taught me her rating system for her digital music library.

5 stars: Wow! I would listen to this song every day! 4 stars: a great song, not icing on the cake, but hey! It’s still cake… 3 stars: a chocolate chip cookie. 2 stars: a chocolate chip cookie, only one chocolate chip, and slightly burnt on the bottom. 1 star: a cookie crumb, you put it in your mouth, and you don’t even taste anything, and then you ask “Why is this in my life right now?”

Now, a chocolate chip cookie, slightly burnt, with only one chocolate chip, might be 2 stars to one person, but depending on the situation, that cookie could very well become a 5 star cookie, or at least part of a grander 4 or 5 star experience.

What on Earth does this have to do with The Cottonwood Gulch?

Adjusting belief, perspective, and attitude, inevitably adjusts the amount of stars in any given situation. Living the “Gulch Life”, one learns the invaluable skill of how to turn a 2 star cookie into a 5 star cookie.

Being caretaker at Bachechi Open Space offers basic, simple, and rewarding work. Every Sunday I’m able to see all sorts of little kiddos fluttering about in all their unbound cute and curious glory; I get to see how different families interact, and I can revel in the awe and wonder whenever a child looks into the microscope for the first time. This is rewarding.

Sweeping… This is simple. Sweeping could easily be a 1 or 2 star activity. So I’ve starting using sweeping as a mindfulness practice. Instead of being stuck in the future, thinking when the job will be finished and what I’ll do next… I just sweep; just, sweep. I bring my attention to the rhythm of the broom bristles brushing against the concrete, the patterns made in the dust, and the way I hold and use the broom. All of these points of focus teach me to move myself into the now moment. I adjust belief, perspective, and attitude by not listening to the incessant stream of thoughts that tell me sweeping is a 1 or 2 star activity.

This helps me remember. It helps me to remember that no matter if I have a piece of cake on my plate, or a cookie crumb, my experience is not wholly defined by or dependent upon circumstance.
A few weeks ago, a forestry crew thinned 55 acres of our overgrown forest. At first glance, this is a dramatic change. There are piles of wood and limbs branches scattered about the land, and some trees have been limbed four feet off the ground. It's striking, and despite our confidence that we are doing the right thing, it is hard not to question such a big decision like removing hundreds of trees. Complicating our decisions is the history of the Gulch forests. About 100 years ago, before Cottonwood Gulch purchased what is now our base camp, loggers clear cut throughout the Zunis, logging nearly all the large trees on our property. What remains are the stumps, slow to break down in our high desert climate.

There are a couple curious things about these stumps. First, there are many fewer stumps than live trees. Second, the stumps are much larger than nearly every living tree around them. In other words, before loggers came to the area, the forest looked very different. The trees were larger, spaced out, and fewer in number. There were more meadows and grasses and forbs. Greater open space meant more natural fire breaks, more grasses to carry low-intensity fires across the ground, and larger ponderosas with fire-resistant trunks that lower the risk of massive crown fires.

Put candidly, before Cottonwood Gulch, those in charge of managing this land did a poor job. They harvested too many trees in search of short-term profits (a practice called high-grading), and later encouraged excessive livestock grazing and suppressed all fires, even those that were in the long-term benefit of the forest. We have learned much about forest management since then, and our goals are different than previous land owners. We are encouraging a resilient forest, one that can support a diverse array of species, bounce back from fires, and adapt to a changing climate. We have a good idea how to do that, but given constant reminders of past mistakes, we also strive to remain humble. 100 years from now, what will foresters say about our current practices? We have confidence that we are on the right track, but we are also confident that we do not have all the answers.

Our recent thinning is meant to accomplish several goals, while remaining humble about our ability to control the landscape.

**Safety.** Our overgrown forests are fire prone. By thinning, we reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fire and encourage select trees to grow large and fire-resistant like the trees that dotted our landscape over 100 years ago. Additionally, we removed dead trees and limbs around our buildings that threatened to fall.

**Forest health and biodiversity.** A healthy forest is diverse. There are stands of mature trees, patches of young seedlings, areas of open space, and so on. Right now our property is mostly dense, short, middle age trees competing for the same scarce resources. Thinning has many benefits, and we are confident that our land management plan is moving in the right direction. At the same time, we try to act with a light hand, not a heavy one. We are still learning about the forests, and we are likely to encounter unforeseen problems over the coming decades. We are not in complete control of our forests, but we are doing our best to nudge the land in the right direction.

Think of it as many straws all drinking from the same big glass. Thinning reduces the number of straws so the remaining trees can grow and thrive more easily. Thinning also creates open spaces, allowing more grasses and forbs to emerge, which in turn encourages herbivores to move through the property. A healthy, diverse forest attracts a wider variety of birds and small mammals. All of these changes make the forest more interesting, beautiful, and resilient to change.

**Education.** Hundreds of people visit the Gulch each year, and most of them only see a small percentage of base camp. We hope to make a larger portion of the property accessible through low-impact trails. At the same time, we plan to permanently close off old roads and designate large tracts of the Gulch as roadless, wilderness areas. Thinning will allow larger trees to flourish, providing shade and beauty for educational activities. Increased biodiversity will also make the Gulch an even better outdoor laboratory for our ecology program.

Wilderness First Aid Courses

Sponsored by Cottonwood Gulch, taught by the Wilderness Medicine Institute

For those of you who spend much of your lives outdoors—or those who want to spend more time outdoors—these courses will give you skills and confidence to live safely in the wilderness. We require our staff to complete WFA training, and many have WFR or WEMT level certifications. We highly recommend these courses.

**Courses in Albuquerque**

Wilderness First Responder: March 6-15
WFR Recertification: May 23-25

**Course in Thoreau, NM**

Wilderness First Aid: June 9-10

For more information, visit our website: www.cottonwoodgulch.org

![Map of Cottonwood Gulch and Thinning Areas]
We recently started using a new phrase in our communications with alumni: “Give a Trek, Steward a Forest, Grow a Story.” The last part of that phrase has really spoken to me when reflecting over my past year at the Gulch. I look back to the person I was and how I have grown by being a part of this community.

A year ago I was an urban geologist, a city girl. I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in earth and environmental science in downtown Chicago. In the Windy City, most of the rocks are concrete, so I knew that once I graduated I would likely have to move for a job in my field (I love saying ‘in my field’ because so much of what I now love to do is literally in fields).

One year ago, I made my initial journey to the Southwest. I had a brand-new backpack, a bright pink fleece, and my “Roadside Geology of New Mexico” book, which I read on the three-hour plane ride. I could not wait to see rocks in person that I had only seen pictures of in my textbooks. I was excited to share my love of rocks and science with everyone who would listen. That excitement is still strong because I get to experience so many different geologic settings with so many different groups.

We take some of our school groups to a slot canyon between Base Camp and Gallup. It is one of my favorite places to talk geology because we get to see erosion, (sometimes actively, if it’s windy!), hundreds of feet of layers of sedimentary rocks, and evidence of the long-gone oceans that used to cover the area. As we hike to the top of the mesa, the rock colors change under our feet, telling a story of geologic time. We climb down into a natural water reservoir in the rock, used to collect rainwater by humans. Along the cliffs of the mesas, we can spot where the rock face is sheltered enough to protect soil and gather water so greenery can grow. We walk over possible, though still unconfirmed, imprints of coral.

At the very end of the hike, we squeeze, shimmy, and wiggle between the sides of the slot canyon. I love this last part of the hike because the rock is the only thing to hold onto, the only thing supporting us. At this point the rock becomes something you’ve learned about and something you’ve learned from.

This spring I will have the pleasure of working with the University of Delaware when they come to the Southwest for a field camp. Serendipitously, one of my earth science professors from Chicago is now the Department Chair and will be joining us on the trip. I’m sure these students and professors have done their research of the area and will have new things to show me, and I will have my own experiences to share with them.

After living out of my backpack on and off for the past year, it is now covered with tree sap and sweat stains. The fleece is now a more muted pink because there is dirt that I swear will never come out, no matter how many washes, and it has a nice melted part on the back where it caught fire while cooking.

Looking back on that city girl, I see parts that are the same and parts that are different. I still have my Dr. Martens and my thick Chicago accent, but I’ve learned that I can cook for 60 people out of a road kitchen, pour concrete countertops, lead a stream velocity experiment for middle schoolers, get teenage girls interested in rocks and science, and that stop-drop-and-roll really does work.
Thanks to our Generous Contributors

The following individuals and families have given generously to the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation during the dates of Oct 1, 2014 - March 1, 2015. We are extraordinarily grateful for all of the support!
Your contributions are the mortar for our Foundation. Thank you very much.

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