How Do You Climb A Mountain?

by Kris Salisbury

I unzipped my bivy sack to the sounds of pots and pans being moved across the stove. It’s 4am and time to wake up the school group trekkers and climb Mt. Taylor for sunrise. My bivy had a sheet of frost coating the material and each time I exhaled, my breath was visible in a plume of white steam. I wander over to our cook to warm my hands on a cup of hot tea before I go to motivate our slumbering trekkers. The time had come to climb this mountain.

Have you ever stood at the trailhead of a mountain, glancing up with a bit of trepidation and wondering, if only for a moment, if you have what it’s going to take to summit? The older I get the less I wonder this – not because my body is more fit and capable, but because my mind is more confident and able. That will not be the reality for these 6th graders, though. They will still be learning the lesson that only experience can teach. They will still be figuring out the metaphor that this mountain might hold in this early morning, that will apply to the rest of their life.

Today, we will embark on the lessons of challenging adversity, overcoming obstacles, relying on others, building resiliency and ultimately, knowing our limits – those that are real and more importantly, those that limit us but have no basis in truth.

I think those are the hardest to realize. We won’t teach this in the modern way of standing at the front of the room and ‘telling’, but instead by walking each step in unison with them. We will lend a hand, offer a word of encouragement, ensure them of their strength, wipe away tears of frustration, and between these moments, remind them of how the work we do changes lives.

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When I came to the Gulch in 2012, after identifying the goal in mind, and surely, if the feat is indeed possible, we will arrive at the summit in time for sunrise. The students and I rounded the last hairpin in the series of switchbacks just as the light of the sky started suggesting sunrise was imminent. We added a little pep to our pace and reached the summit as the first piercing rays of sunrise crested over the Sandias. The students beam with accomplishment as they flop down, spread cream cheese on their bagels and watched and warmed as the sun rose over the distant mountains.

The lesson had been given even though its unfolding will take years to fully reveal itself.

I’ve always liked hiking Mt Taylor with kids. The wide open steep meadow where one can see the city lights of Albuquerque and the blinking red lights of the Pueblo Laguna’s wind turbines reminds us of our location right before we duck into the Ponderosa canopy of the forest for the final ascent. The students and I rounded the last hairpin in the series of switchbacks just as the light of the sky started suggesting sunrise was imminent. We added a little pep to our pace and reached the summit as the first piercing rays of sunrise crested over the Sandias. The students beam with accomplishment as they flop down, spread cream cheese on their bagels and watched and warmed as the sun rose over the distant mountains.

Help the Gulch get up to our summit before sunrise. Join us with a financial boost to overcome the final challenges to climbing to the top of this mountain. Together, we can put one foot in front of other and just like our school group, we will see the success of our hard work, but for us it will be in the lives of all of our trekkers.
Dear Gulch Family,

It is with pride and humility that I write you about our organization, the Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions. When I think about the Gulch legacy, it’s all about the people, as revered family names come to mind: names like HOWIE, OLMSTEAD, FORTUNE, ROHDEHAMEL, VONNEGUT, HENIO, and MERRELL. These families from Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Gallup are aligned with the earliest trek traditions.

The Hoopers are newcomers to the Trek scene. We came along in the 60’s when Mr. Howie still ruled the expeditions, but shared the limelight with names like KUBIT, MACNEALE, BILLINGS, TREVATHAN and VANSICKLE. We arrived in the middle of the Trek history and came to embrace the Gulch traditions. (Mr. Howie let my parents know that ours was the first family he had permitted campers to attend the summer sessions without first going through an “in person family interview.” Thanks, Mr. Howie, for letting that rule slide!) Having camped alongside several groups of trekkers at the Grand Canyon and Canyon de Chelly in the late 1950’s, Mr. Howie made an exception for my sisters, Eleanor and Millie, who first attended the Turquoise Trail in 1965. Our parents slid into the trek alumni status through the back door, by enrolling the Family Trek one summer in the 1980’s. The family Gulch legacy persists.

Now, some 50+ years later, nary a summer has passed without a child or grandchild of the Hooper’s attending. Nearly every regional trip by a trek recruiting staff member includes a sojourn to a Hooper home in Maryland, Virginia, California, Oregon, or New Hampshire. Slide shows, stories, games of muddie and songs rule of the night. We believe in outdoor, experiential education. We may be newcomers, but we affirm the Gulch mission and are confident in its viability in society today.

More than ever we need to fight nature deficiency in our children. Our families need to get kids outside, away from their electronic devices, exploring nature and the world. We need to show them a better way of learning and of living. We need to share our environmental ethic for a better future.

I feel fortunate to serve as Chair of the Expeditions, as we enter our 90th summer. I honor my predecessors Chairs, including Hillis Howie, Ned Merrell, John Bloch, Larry Barker, Jamey French, and __________ many others. We have an extraordinary Executive Director in Kris Salisbury, and we have an inspired staff who believe in our work. It is an honor to help the Expedition in its stewardship of our endowment, our buildings and grounds, and our traditions. We are doing some outstanding building projects at Base Camp, which you will be hearing about in future newsletters.

COME SEE US: Please set aside the weekend of August 11 - 14 to attend our 90th Anniversary at Base Camp, in Thoreau, New Mexico. “It will be a grand weekend and one heck of a party,” says fellow Board Member, Beth Williams-Breault. We have some exciting plans for the future of the Gulch and we would love to have you there to see what is happening and share in the celebration.

Sincerely yours,

Henry E. Hooper
Cottonwood Gulch Board Chair

Please welcome our new board member!

Join us for

Rendezvous 2016

First Rendezvous: July 9th
Second Rendezvous: July 30th
90th Reunion: Aug 12-14th

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.

We hope you will also join us for the 90th Reunion as well. To register for this or if you plan to visit the Gulch any time this summer, email us your plans. We look forward to seeing you.

kris@cottonwoodgulch.org
Come One, Come All...
...to our 90th Reunion

Tentative Schedule of Events and Activities

Friday
10:00am Van Shuttle departs from ABQ
11:00am Registration and Reunion Treks return
12:30pm Kick off lunch
2:30pm Cottonwoods
  Bluewater Creek Exploration
  “The Reunion Rug” Weaving Workshop
  Forest Health and Restoration Workshop
  Farm To Table Workshop
  “Trekker Power Project” - Cha’oh Pavilion
  Masonry & Bench Building Cont’d
  Naturalist - Uncovering Base Camp
  Walking the Fence at BC
  Community Art Project
2:00 Van shuttle departs from ABQ
4:00pm Happy Hour - Envisioning the Future
5:00pm Navajo Rug Auction Field Trip (sack dinner)
5:00pm Gallup Ceremonial Field Trip (sack dinner)
6:00pm Dinner
8:00pm Campfire at the campfire circle
10:00pm After hours music jam

Saturday
7:00am Bells and Wake Up
7:30am Breakfast
8:00am Silent Auction Opens
9:00am Cottonwoods Activities
  Rappelling into Bluewater Creek
  “The Reunion Rug” Weaving Workshop Cont’d
  Nature Journaling In Ponderosa Grove
  Music In The Hogan
  “Trekker Power Project” - Cha’oh Pavilion
  Masonry & Bench Building Cont’d
  Bird Walk Up Sawyer Creek
  Community Art Project Cont’d
  Archaeology Walk
9:00am All Day Outings
  Slot Canyon Adventure
  Rock Climbing At Mentmore
  Zuni Art and Pueblo Walk With Ken Scotowa
  Acoma Pueblo Tour
  Gallup Flea Market and Town Stop
  Biking in the Zuni’s
12 noon Lunch
1:30pm Siesta
2:30pm Cottonwood Activities
  Rappelling into Blue Creek
  “The Reunion Rug” Weaving Workshop Cont’d
  Music In The Hogan/Band Scramble
  “Trekker Power Project” - Cha’oh Pavilion
  Masonry & Bench Building Cont’d
  Nature Walk Up Sawyer Creek
  Forest Health and Restoration Workshop
  Archery with The Scott Brothers
  Community Art Project Cont’d
4:00pm Showers/Pool Time
4:00pm Happy Hour (TBD at Board Meeting)
4:00pm Gulch Forum - Envisioning The Future TBD
5:30pm Ribbon Cutting and Dinner
7:00pm Envisioning our Future “Kick Off”
7:30pm Final Bids Silent Auction
8:00pm Campfire in the Cha’oh
10:00pm Band Scramble & Dance

Sunday
8:00 Bells and Wake Up
8:30 Breakfast
9:00 Van Shuttle To ABQ Airport
9:00am Womens Wilderness Trek Departs
11:00 Final Van Shuttle To ABQ Airport

Rekindle an old friendship
or make a new one on a
Reunion Trek!

August 12-14, 2016

Register at:
www.cottonwoodgulch.org
(Click the “90th Celebration Link”)
From Wolves to Dogs

by Carl Malcolm

People who grew up in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula inevitably and justifiably rely on our hands as map surrogates when referencing hometowns. I’m a grateful product of that neck of the beechn and maple forests demarcated by your left pinky fingernail – Leelanau County. My parents raised my brother and me to recognize what good fortune this personal geography was for us. Many of the points of appreciation on our family list stemmed from the naturalness that surrounded us. I spent high school summers as first mate on a salmon boat fishing East Grand Traverse Bay, and we generally saw more wildlife than traffic jams. None of us took our surroundings for granted. It seems in hindsight like Mom and Dad commented on the beauty of the bays and forested hills almost daily. We lived them.

My younger brother, our childhood friends and I had trout streams within hiking distance, reliable morel mushroom hunting grounds, and camping spots with custom-built forts strewn from the back door to the horizon. Among my favorite features on that landscape was an old, slightly rusty twelve-inch cast iron skillet we kept wrapped in a black plastic garbage bag and hidden in a log pile near a favorite stream. The skillet and nearby fire ring were a destination as much as the stream. With sleeping bags, a book of matches, a pocket knife, and a little bottle of cooking oil we felt prepared for the life of mountain men. Never mind faint peach fuzz mustaches and crack-prone voices that were just starting to drop an octave or two. If it was spring the camp menu would always include trout. We’d usually keep the browns that met the 8 inch minimum required by the State of Michigan while returning native brookies back to their plunge pools and undercut banks. Dad cut me a length of shoelace for use as a gaff. We added to our gear list starting in mid-September. The ability to gather, catch, hunt, clean, cook, and eat over a small game with the bows and arrows or .22 caliber rifles were a perfect addition, especially if morels or beefsteak mushrooms were in supply. In early autumn the menu might include black raspberries, crab apples, and squirrels, rabbits or the occasional ruffed grouse. We hunted small game with the bows and arrows or .22 caliber rifles we added to our gear list starting in mid-September. The ability to gather, catch, hunt, clean, cook, and eat over a self-built campfire without adult contribution or interference was an impactful rite of passage for us. It was one we relished and it’s still a favorite ceremony today.

At first blush and by today’s standards it sounds counterintuitive that a roving band of kids starting fires and toting knives, bows, arrows, and guns were actually staying out of trouble rather than getting into it. But during our overnight trips to the stream and skillet, with our essential collection of gear in hand, we were the antithesis of Richard Louv’s much bemoaned “Last Child in the Woods”.

My mother had a real stroke of genius when I was in ninth grade. She made a deal that if I kept my grades up she would give me the discretion to choose one school day each semester when she would call the front office and excuse my absence from the fluorescently lit hallways of formal learning. What a brilliant move.

To be wandering the hills towards my stream and skillet on a weekday morning, knowing my classmates were sitting in homeroom starting a standard day of schoolwork was pure magic. And naturally those woods provided lessons that have stuck with me more than much of what I learned in a formal setting. I found newborn whitetail fawns, saw a redtail hawk snag a screeching rabbit, installed a maple sap line, and had a flying squirrel land on my leg while sitting motionless in predawn darkness. I can trace my path during the past 20 years directly back to those unsupervised trips to my wild spots. They led me to a natural resources degree program in college and to studying wildlife and protected natural areas on the other side of the globe, in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, China. Those experiences put me on course to my current position as a wildlife ecologist working for the U.S. Forest Service in Albuquerque.

Wildlife ecologists are trained to pay attention to interactions of species with their surroundings. How and what animals eat, where they find refuge, how they move, how they interact with other animals – their predators, their prey. Ultimately, it’s these behaviors and interactions that define a species. They are what give each species a unique identity. And I believe that it’s these same traits that define each of us individually. And furthermore, on a broader level, these are traits that define our species. Let me illustrate my point with a couple of examples. Mountain lions are among the most impressive predators on this continent. Here in New Mexico they commonly hunt mule deer, elk, and, where they are available, bighorn sheep. These prey species are nearly always on the lookout for trouble and can be several times larger than the feline hunter. So pound for pound mountain lions are incredibly sleek and strong – built to stalk in stealth, to pounce, and overpower. They cover a huge amount of ground. Male home range sizes can vary from 25 to 500 square miles, while females usually occupy smaller areas of 8 to 400 square miles.

Now consider a mountain lion in captivity, housed under the highest care standards in a world class zoo. No enclosure will ever approach the animal’s natural home range. No captive zoo diet will serve as a true surrogate for the menu or behavior of a wild counterpart. So my question for you is this; is the captive mountain lion less of a mountain lion than her wild sister? I believe the answer is yes. By completely removing an animal from its natural context and ecology I believe you detract from that individual’s identity. You make it less of what it would otherwise be.

Perhaps the plainest example of what I am getting at is our collective best friend, Canis familiaris – the domestic pooch. With roots tracing back some 33,000 years to the first known domestication of the wolf, the diverse world of dog breeds today epitomizes how a wild species identity – that of the wolf - can evaporate over time in a world of commerce and coddling. Contrast the life and ecology of the wild predecessor – Canis lupus, to that of some popular breeds today. Compare loping untold miles in search of prey to riding in a designer purse through an urban landscape. Contrast a diet of moose, deer, beaver, or elk to an entrée like that offered by “Chef K9’s Doggy Bistro and Bakery”, a site I found at the top of the list when Googling “gourmet dog food”.

One of their popular options consists of, and I quote directly: “Ground Shoulder of Nebraska Angus Beef and Hormone-Free Oven Baked Chicken Breast served over Pearl Barley and Oven-Roasted Idaho Russet Potatoes with a large Sautéed Assortment of Yellow Squash, California Carrots, Broccoli, Green Beans, & Garlic. Topped off with our Fresh Baked Toasted Whole-Wheat Croutons, Organic Safflower Oil, and Freshly Shredded Cheddar Cheese.”

Contrast a wolf’s honed set of physical traits – eyes, ears, nose, mind, and instinct - perfectly attuned to the natural world, against the litany of physical and mental ailments that have resulted from dog breed specialization. Some products of canine domestication are basically unrecognizable as relatives of their wild wolf brethren. Their wild identity is, in those cases, virtually lost. Just as humankind has domesticated the wolf during the past 30,000 years, so too have we domesticated ourselves. We’ve lost much of our own wilderness as a species. The lives of people around the world today, for the most part, bear little resemblance to those of our Pleistocene predecessors.

And I’m not saying that’s a bad thing.

On the contrary I harbor no illusions regarding the difficulties of attempting, in any era, to live off the land and I’m not discounting the societal progress we’ve made on many crucial fronts. I value modern medicine as one obvious example. My bed is soft, my shower runs hot, and I’m thankful for a good roof during the Southwestern monsoon season. We live longer and, in many ways, our lives are far better.

The problem is that our self-domestication is accompanied by a loss of environmental awareness and ecological literacy. With each added step in the supply chains that provide our food, energy, shelter, and overall comfort comes a widening gap between our day to day lives and the natural world.
upon which we all ultimately depend. Too many of us are mentally and physically insulated from that dependence and connection. The wild wolf knows exactly where her dinner was sourced. The pug in the high rise knows only her master, the bowl, and the tin can of gourmet ingredients.

Without keen cognizance of our own personal reliance on healthy functioning natural systems we lose sight of our most obvious motivation for environmental stewardship – which boils down to our own self-interest and the commendable desire to leave a habitable place for those who will follow us. There are many ways for us to remind ourselves of our linkage to and dependence on the natural world. One obvious choice is to be directly involved in the production or procurement of our own food. I view the booming interest in backyard gardens, gathering and foraging, urban and suburban chicken coops, and community supported agriculture as testaments of the people’s appetite for this sort of connection. We are what we eat so it’s logical that many of us want to put food in our bodies that we feel good about. Connection to source is certainly among the most rewarding aspects to my family when it comes to growing food for our table. Sun + seed + soil + water = life = food.

Amazing when you take time to think about it. This same desire for a direct link to natural processes and an awareness of my dependence on the land is also a central motivator for me as a hunter. My childhood land fragments and fences are analogous to the zoo walls containing the mountain lion. A city park does not meet my needs. Private lands I can see but I cannot touch do not suit me. And when wild places I know well unexpectedly sprout cul-de-sacs and houses it literally hurts. Chances are that most of us can recall a wild place that has been tamed during our lifetime. Each of these places represents something sacred lost that almost certainly will not be regained in foreseeable times. These unquantifiable losses of a dwindling places and desecrated places.”

That conversion, from sacred to desecrated, accelerates with our population and with advances in our technological capacity. The pressure in the system only seems to grow. This is where our wild public lands really shine.

By securing these places in the public trust for the long haul we are maintaining crucial habitat for more than the fish, wildlife, and plants residing there. We are retaining habitat for human wilderness. People like me require landscapes offering solitude and naturalness. Places where we can escape. The bigger the better. We have a low tolerance for development in our playgrounds and holy places. To us, fragmented parcels and fences are analogous to the zoo walls containing the mountain lion. A city park

The log pile where my skillet had been stashed was cleared away. I got home and studied the land ownership plat book to make sense of what had happened during my time away at school. My childhood landscape is a patchwork of state land and privately held woodlots. As a kid I never paid much attention to where one parcel ended and the next began, and it was care for anyone to post their property or install any kind of a fence. It turned out of course that my special spot technically belonged to somebody I did not know. Claims of eminent domain related to childhood expeditions seemed unlikely to prevail in grown-up court. Rather than mounting a case I was left instead to host and attend a one-man mental funeral for a place known, loved, and lost. I provided a silent eulogy featuring wild trout, sautéed mushrooms, my younger brother, cut feet, leaky tents, boyhood friendships, and a permanently lost skillet. Soon after that hike my brother sent me a quote from Wendell Berry, who wrote, “There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places.”
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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Pre-reunion Family Trek
The Reunion Family Trek starts August 6th and will spend three days at Base Camp before hitting the road and finally concluding back at Base Camp on August 12th for the 90th Anniversary celebration. You will be visiting some amazing places that you may have visited in the past but worthy of visiting for the first time or again. The Family Trek allows you time to share some special moments and add memories that will last forever. The trek will include Zuni Art and Pueblo Walk with Ken Seotowa, Mount Taylor ,Chaco Canyon and Ahshishlepah. We look forward to seeing you on this trek!

August 6 - 11, 2016 (includes reunion)

Skies & Canyons Trek -
Explore Astronomy & Archaeology in the SW
Have you ever looked into the sky and thought about what ancient people observed and how it influenced their life? This Trek will begin at Blanco River Campground and then head to Chimney Rock where the Ancestral Puebloans lived. We will explore how they centered their daily life as they observed the land and sky around them. From there we will head to Chaco Canyon to hike and explore the ruins. With two nights at both Chimney Rock and Chaco Canyon we will have time for stargazing, sunrise and sunsets, with day hikes, ruins to explore and time to relax. We will continue our trek at Base Camp on August 12th for the 90th Anniversary celebration. We look forward to seeing you on this trek!

August 8-14, 2016 (includes reunion)

Art and Culture in the Zunis
Join us as we re-visit some of the Gulch’s favorite Zuni Mountains sites. From ABQ, we will head into the wildlands of northwestern New Mexico. This breathtaking physical space can have a tremendous impact on the creative self. During our trek we will explore our sense of place through different creative processes, including writing, drawing, painting, and music. In addition to living “life on the road” and hiking in some of New Mexico’s hidden treasures, these creative opportunities will connect us more deeply with the Southwestern landscape. You will be able to sketch the expansive sunrise views from the top of Mount Taylor, and reflect on the historic complexity of El Morro in your notebook. We will break out our instruments to play and sing around the campfire, share our reflections from the day, and fall asleep under a blanket of stars.

August 9-14, 2016 (includes reunion)

Women’s Wilderness Trek
Come and share eight days on the Women’s Wilderness Trek. Join women of all ages on a trek that will take you to North Central New Mexico as you discover life in the Desert Southwest. This rejuvenating week will re-connect you with the life that thrives in this unique climate as you slow down and rejuvenate from nature with time to explore the water, the plants, the sites and the land. We will leave from Base Camp on August 14th as the 90th Anniversary celebration comes to a close. We look forward to seeing you on the trek! Come engage in this supportive community of women seeking adventure, camaraderie, and connection to the outdoors. An edifying opportunity to recalibrate and connect!

August 12 - 21, 2016 (includes reunion)
Check out our Progress on the Cha’oh!

In 1934, a beloved woman, named Peggy MacNeale joined the first-ever Turquoise Trail led by Elizabeth Howie. In honor of her memory, the MacNeale family has contributed generously to fund a large portion of this project. Coupled with several other ‘Campaign for the Gulch’ donors, we are nearing completion of a beautiful community gathering space just beyond the Eastern end of the playing field at our Base Camp. This is the second project in our ‘Campaign for the Gulch’ Action List. Join us at the 90th to memorialize trekkers who came before and dedicate this Cha’oh, (that’s diné for shade structure), to Grandpa Tom and Grandma Ada Henio, the elders of the Henio Family, who committed many a summer to our programs, buildings and culture.

Can you provide financial support to get us to the next phase of our project?
Can you provide the financial support to get us to the next phase of our project list?

...A Gathering Place for our Entire Community

Check out our Progress on the Cha’oh!
For Albuquerque Families:

Sunday Family Fun at Bachechi Open Space
Every Sunday, 10am-4pm
Beginning February 1st, 2015

Hands-on learning for kids and parents
Take a hike
Bring a picnic
Get Outdoors
Activities led by Cottonwood Gulch staff

A partnership of Bernalillo County and Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions

Where is Bachechi?
9521 Rio Grande Blvd NW, Albuquerque, NM
Protecting the Greater Chaco Landscape through BLM Planning
By: Joelle Marier, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

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ravel in any direction from Farmington, New Mexico and you will find a legacy of culture past and present. To traverse these landscapes is to walk the paths of ancestral Pueblo peoples, to move across lands once populated by dinosaurs, to be immersed in a landscape of strange formations, or to spook an unsuspecting mule deer.

If you’ve been to northwestern New Mexico, you know what a special place this is. Here, layers of sandstone, shale, mudstone, coal, and silt have eroded into an unusual landscape of strange rock formations and a diverse assemblage of well-preserved fossils to reveal a slice of Earth’s geological and biological history. Despite a sometimes stark façade, several species of flora and fauna call this corner of New Mexico home – turkey, mule deer, black bear, elk, and many birds of prey – to name a few. As the hub for the Greater Chaco Landscape, this region not only contains significant cultural resources, but also retains cultural significance for present day indigenous peoples. Humans have had a continuous presence here for over 10,000 years.

For humans of today, northwestern New Mexico can also be a place of recreation and reflection. Wild, undeveloped spaces help maintain these unique values and contribute to the quality of quiet recreational activities such as hiking, sightseeing, backpacking, climbing, hunting, fishing, camping, birdwatching, and photography.

Another thing you may know if you’ve traveled here is that expanding oil and gas development threatens to further impact this already impacted place. Between 84% and 94% of local lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are leased for oil and gas. In comparison, only 3.6% are managed as Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas. With BLM lands comprising approximately 20% of the land base in this region, high levels of development result in landscape-scale impacts. Current oil and gas development planning includes BLM lands adjacent to Chaco Cultural National Historical Park and within the range of known Chacoan archeological sites. If allowed, development could impact the cultural resources, scenic vistas, and dark night skies that are integral components of the park.

Fortunately, an opportunity to protect some of these special wild lands is on the horizon. Right now, the Farmington BLM Field Office is in the process of amending their 2003 Resource Management Plan (RMP) to address potential expansion of oil and gas development in the Mancos/Gallup Formation, which lies beneath 4.2 million acres of federal, state, private, and tribal lands in northeastern New Mexico. Identification of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs) is an integral part of this planning process. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has identified over 30,000 acres of LWCs spanning areas of cultural, geological, paleontological, and ecological importance. While these lands may meet the BLM’s required criteria, this does not guarantee their wilderness qualities will be preserved. In the Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA), the BLM can formally recognize these areas as having wilderness characteristics and can decide to manage them for preservation of these characteristics for the life of the plan. Without this formal recognition, these wilderness-quality lands become fair game for oil and gas leasing or other uses that could alter their integrity and future wilderness potential.

Legislation has recently been introduced in Congress to expand wilderness designation to the Ahsh-i-sle-pah Wilderness Study Area and to wild lands adjacent to the Bisti-de-na-zin Wilderness. This is certainly an important step forward for land protection, though congressional action can take years with no guarantee of ultimate success. The interim protection granted by administrative decisions to preserve wilderness characteristics adds a temporary safeguard in an area under great pressure from industrial interests. Release of the draft RMPA (anticipated sometime this fall, 2016) will trigger a 90-day public comment period within which it will be important to add a public voice in support of keeping northwestern New Mexico’s wild lands wild. During the comment period, we want to tell the BLM: 1) to let existing oil and gas leases on parcels within the viewedh of Chaco Culture National Historical Park expire without the possibility for renewal; 2) to make unleased lands in the vicinity of Chaco unleaseable; and 3) to recognize Lands with Wilderness Characteristics and decide to manage these lands to preserve their wilderness character.

You have an opportunity to help protect the still wild places in this special corner of New Mexico. If you care about northwestern New Mexico and the Four Corners, your voice is needed! Please encourage your friends, family, and larger community to get involved and stay involved. After all, these are OUR public lands!

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
WFR Recertification: May 23-25

Course in Thoreau, NM
Wilderness First Aid: June 9-10

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

New Mexico passes Environmental Education Memorial!
By: Cass Landrum

This January, environmental educators, students from Kathryn Gallegos Elementary and supportive citizens assembled at the Round House in Santa Fe in support of House Joint Memorial 3. I was moved to tears by the sheer possibility of this action, and the support of those promoting it.

This Memorial will have significant impact on Environmental Education organizations in New Mexico, including Cottonwood Gulch, and highlights the educators such as myself, who worked on the Environmental Literacy Plan.

It also:
1. Affirms the importance of Environmental Education

2. Declares “Environmental Education Week” in April, encouraging all K-12 students to spend at least one hour of learning time outdoors

3. Requires NM Game & Fish & Dept. of Agriculture to lead a study on the feasibility of an EE grant program

4. Asks the Public Education Department to link to the environmental literacy plan as a resource for teachers

On February 18th, it passed unanimously in both the House and Senate. I am honored to be part of a state that values the environment as uniquely as New Mexico does, and am looking forward to the upcoming challenges as we take the next steps in securing environmental education for all students statewide.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
www.nmwild.org
See A Job & Do it!
(Mr. Howie’s way)

‘We see the job... ...and we need your help to do it!’

Our Base Camp outside of Thoreau, New Mexico is brimming with trekkers! Today’s strong interest in our unique approach to outdoor education and scientific discovery requires a new investment in our facilities. Help us preserve our ethic, conserve our land, and better serve future generations of trekkers.

“IT took me a long time to realize what a great man Hillis Howie was. That’s part of the American experience... to suddenly come across a truly great person who never becomes rich or famous, but who is enormously beneficial just to those near him. Hillis Howie was such a person, a great naturalist, very kind and strong with boys... He ran these expeditions to the West and they still go on. It was his invention.”

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

from ‘Galapagos’

Mess Hall Upgrade and Quartermaster Extension $1.5m

- Adds a 3-season bunkhouse and staff room
- Provides solar power for our kitchen
- Improves expedition vehicle packing area
- Relocates showers out of Sawyer Creek
- Augments farm-to-table initiative
- Updates and expands kitchen prep area
- Provides ADA accessibility

Tom and Ada Henio Pavilion $200k

- Open air structure to seat over 160
- Covered space for meetings, dining, Rendezvous and campfires
- Accessible for our community

Ponderosa Cabin Loop $250k

- Accommodates our resident trekker need
- Utilizes natural building techniques
- Three-season design to extend our season
- Integrated placement and trail system
- Traditional Gulch ‘feel’ and ‘look’

Our Campaign Leadership Team

Honorary Chair: John Bloch
Chair: Jameson French
Co-chair: Greg Barker
Leadership Giving Co-Chairs:
Henry Hooper
Kerry Stein
Major Gifts Co-Chairs:
Tom Hyde
Ellen Ebersole
Community Giving Co-Chairs:
Scott Pierce
Ellen Madden
Our Base Camp outside of Thoreau, New Mexico is brimming with trekkers! Today's strong interest in our unique approach to outdoor education and scientific discovery requires a new investment in our facilities. Help us preserve our ethic, conserve our land, and better serve future generations of trekkers.

From our Director

As we approach our 90th year of programming, I am humbled by the innovation and forethought that our founder had in the design and implementation of this inspirational and life changing place. Since then, our programs have maintained that spirit and found ways to be relevant and vital to each generation. As the world we live in changes, we look to our history, our philosophy and our pedagogy to direct us in our decision making and innovation.

Since the early 2000's, we have expanded our programs and season to accommodate school treks. This is an exciting part of what we do as we seek to share our hands-on approach to learning with students both at base camp and on the road. Teachers from around the country come to us seeking a way to “fill the gap” and get kids connected with the outdoors and the topics they are learning.

Our summer treks are still at the heart of our programs. Treks wander the American Southwest in search of discovery of science, art, culture and of course, self!

Legacy Fund $700k
• Provides scholarships which contribute to a diverse community
• Funds land stewardship at Base Camp
• Supports building upkeep and repair
• Ensures a vibrant future!

Henio Cha'oh Pavilion $200k
• Open air structure to seat over 160 for meetings, dining, campfires
• Accessible for our community’s New Albuquerque Office & Bunkhouse $350k
The purchase and renovation of our Albuquerque office and bunkhouse:
• Expands opportunities for year-round programming
• Solidifies our presence in the Rio Grande Valley for school year programming and state-wide initiatives
• Increases our housing, office, storage and meeting space
• Provides spring/fall seasonal staff housing

Leadership Team
Honorary Chair: John Bloch
Chair: Jameson French
Co-Chair: Greg Barker
Major Gifts Co-Chairs: Henry Hooper, Kerry Stein
Community Giving Co-Chairs: Scott Pierce, Ellen Madden
W

The Women of our Early History
by Michael Wagner

Remembering “Mr. Van”
By: Martin Berman

John Van Sickle was an integral part of the Trek for many years. Affectionately known as “Mr. Van” he was Group 1 leader from 1963-1978 and a member of base camp staff for many years after that. Mr. Van was passionate about science, history and exploration but was driven by the desire to educate. Whether it was under the Cottonwoods or around the campfire Mr. Van was alternatively intriguing us with stories and challenging us with questions as a way to get his trekkers to look at the world in a different manner. I recall one somewhat lethargic fellow trekker saying that he was going to spend his day looking at “bugs, insects and stuff” and Mr. Van replied “Do you know the difference between bugs and insects?” and thus began a very interesting lesson in taxonomic hierarchy.

Every campfire included discussions about local history and science which Mr. Van would bring alive in his own special way. Mr. Van never missed an opportunity to introduce us to local figures who could pass on an oral history that we would not find in a formal classroom. I must admit that I have forgotten some of the names but I remember vividly the elderly woman (back in the 60s) who had worked as one of the first telephone operators in the Socorro area and told us stories of Billy the Kid. Or Mr. Lambsden who explained the early history of Mormons in New Mexico or the rancher whose large house was once occupied by on the run gangsters in the 30’s.

When on the road, rather than go to some of the better known, frequently visited locations, Mr. Van would lead us to places where we most likely would not travel on our own. As he often said “I want to take you to places where you just might need a group of people to push the vehicles back on the road”.

A love of the Southwest and a passion for education were two essential elements of Mr. Van’s character and everyone who knew him gained experiences that would last a lifetime. I am therefore very pleased to donate this new addition to the Cottonwood Gulch fleet in his memory. I also think a com is a fitting remembrance of Mr. Van as he took us places we never would have imagined without him.
You helped 1,500 young people find inspiration...
in the wild places of the American Southwest!

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Seth Battis
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Kim Salisbury
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Chuck Whitney
Lezle Williams

Thanks 2015 & 2016 Donors!
Help us “See a Job and Do It”

Your Donation Can...

- Send a PT boy or TT girl to trek $4,150
- Purchase a new Com $30,000
- Build a new composting ‘Lattie’ $2,500
- Upgrade our kitchen $100 and up
- Reduce erosive impact on roads $8,000
- Bring a visiting scholar to the Gulch $2,000
- Thin 20 acres of drought stressed forest $10,000
- Send 25 Title 1 students on a 2-day expedition $3,000
- Build food prep cabinets for new office $3,000
- Or donate your gently used 4WD truck or SUV

When and Where? Check out our Facebook page to identify this location!

www.cottonwoodgulch.org
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