



3.26.2020

Dear Cottonwood Gulch Community,

It is with a heavy heart that I announce the temporary closure of all Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions programs due to COVID-19. Last weekend, our staff and board of directors decided collectively to cancel all programs that were scheduled to start between March and July 2020. This includes the cancellation of all previously scheduled programs this spring and summer.

It was very difficult to come to this decision, and I would like to share our reasoning, and some cause for optimism. First on our minds, of course, is the safety and well-being of our community: trekkers, staff, community partners, and even the global community. While the future course of the pandemic is unknown, the majority of scenarios warn that it will get worse before it gets better, and that the outbreak will continue into the summer. Given this timing, spring programs are clearly untenable, and our summer programs—which bring together Trekkers from all over the world to live in close quarters, in wild places, while traveling throughout the Southwest—bring a risk that is too great in the midst of this crisis.

However, this is not a time of stasis for the Gulch. We are committed to keeping our current staff team employed, and they will bring forth their bountiful skills and creativity to strengthen our capacity for years to come. We will use this time to upgrade our physical infrastructure, refine current programs and systems, and create alternate programs, so that when these uncertain days are past, the Gulch will be in superb condition, and our Treks will be even better.

To make it through this time financially, we are taking a number of steps. We are seeking additional grants and loans. We are cutting costs where we can. We are also soliciting donations from anyone who is able. Your donations are more than simply short-term survival; they allow us to keep staff employed so they can invest in our future. If you can, please consider a donation in the next month.

In the meantime, stay tuned for some new ways to engage with the Gulch. As a place-based, wilderness-loving organization, I recognize the irony of promoting a digital Gulch of any sort, but think of it as turning a bucket of lemons into a cold, tall glass of Gulch juice. Our staff are planning and curating videos and drone footage to share, and we are exploring ideas like virtual campfires, alumni Zoom meetings, and other ways for you to connect with the Gulch from afar. We will keep everyone updated on these happenings via email and social media.

What if the COVID-19 situation quickly gets better? First: celebrate! Even in a best-case scenario, though, 2020 is going to look different, and we will not have a normal slate of summer treks. However, we are brainstorming and preparing for all kinds of alternate programs, and if we are able to offer those this summer or beyond, we will eagerly let you know.

Finally, thank you all in advance for your support. I started this job a week ago, and while the global conditions are unprecedented, I am truly excited for the future of the Gulch. I hope you'll stick close by our side. The future is bright.

Trek on,

Jordan Stone

Executive Director  
Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions

p.s. we have reached out to all families and schools who were registered for a now-canceled program, but if anyone has further questions about program details, financial questions, or anything else, you are welcome to reach me directly at [director@cottonwoodgulch.org](mailto:director@cottonwoodgulch.org).

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