



# Stewardship in Action!

A Volunteer Program Newsletter — Espanola & Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger Districts

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## WISH LIST 2014

☆ Volunteers to help with rehandling and sharpening tools.

☆ Donations for volunteer workdays like food and beverages.

“We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”

Nelson Mandela

# Notes From Jennifer

Phew! That's what I'm inclined to say about 2013. Despite fires, forest closures, and furloughs, Forest volunteers accomplished a lot of great things this past year.

Where do I start? The Dead Dog Trail is so close to being finished. I keep saying that and I really believe it! This spring we'll move the final set of massive boulders, finish the switchbacks, and put the finishing touches on the trail in anticipation of an official opening ceremony of the trail (details to follow).

Let's not forget the great efforts of the Santa Fe Fat Tire Society to maintain their adopted trail, assist Forest Service employees with laying out potential trail re-routes, provide the public with information about responsible mountain biking on the multiple-use trails, and additionally take on a bridge building project that will eventually yield upwards of 17 bridges along the Winsor Trail to be used by bikers and hikers alike. A skilled handful of their members also do the majority of trail clearing on popular trails near Santa Fe and they get to it quickly! It's no wonder they were awarded with Espanola/Pecos-Las Vegas Ranger District Volunteer Program's *Volunteer Group of the Year* Award. Congratulations for your continued dedication to the trails and commitment to a productive and rewarding partnership with the Santa Fe National Forest.

I would like to also mention the Pecos Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen for their great ability to be a Jack (& Jane) -of-all-trades group. In 2013 they received the *Diversity of Duties* Award (or the *We Do Just About Everything* Award) for their amazing ability to step up to the plate and help where needed whether it be out on the trails or at Forest Service administration sites where

maintenance would not get done in a timely fashion without their help. From rehabilitating bridges in the Wilderness to improve safety, clearing trails, packing in gear for other volunteer groups, to fixing water lines, fences, faucets, toilets, and whatever else happens to need attention, they step up to the challenge and put their best into it.

Land stewardship this past year also extends to cleaning up trash. The Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club have banded together with other groups and individuals several times to fight the ongoing challenges of keeping the Buckman area near the Rio Grande free of trash dumped by irresponsible users. Thus, they each received the *Trash Bashin'* Award for 2013 as recognition for their continued efforts to keep the Buckman Bosque free of trash and enjoyable for all. I can only imagine what they have hauled out of there that not many people would be willing to touch. Our hats off to you for your continued dedication!

Check out the newest additions to this edition of *Stewardship in Action!* We're always promoting safety, and the *Safety Spotlight* section will provide explanation and reminders of why we wear Personal Protection Equipment and preach safety at every turn. Leave No Trace principles and activities and a featured trail will provide you with great information about doing your part and exploring new territory on the Espanola and Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger Districts.

As always if you would like to contribute to the newsletter, Julie and I welcome your contributions.

# Trails, Trails, & More Trails!

**Mark your calendars...**

**Spring workdays are almost here!!**

## Dead Dog Trail—we're almost finished!

Meet at the Dead Dog Trailhead, or let Jennifer know if you need directions...

Saturday, March 15 (9:00 to 2:00)

Sunday, March 23 (9:00 to 2:00)

Saturday, April 12 (9:00 to 2:00)

Friday, May 2 (9:00 to 2:00)—let's wrap it up!

## Winsor Trail Re-route Project

We will then begin another re-route project on the Winsor Trail between the Norski Trailhead and Pacheco Canyon Rd. off Hwy. 475.

Sunday, May 4 (9:00 to 2:00)

Saturday, June 7 (9:00 to 2:00) ➔ National Trails Day event

Saturday, June 21 (9:00 to 2:00) ➔ Summer Solstice Celebration

## Featured Trail

*Each newsletter will feature a trail with description, best time to use the trail, and other pertinent information.*

*To kick off the series, we're featuring the **Skyline Trail's** eastern section from the Elk Mountain trailhead north to Cebolla Peak.*

The Skyline Trail (#251) is a spectacular trail that spans over 50 miles of the Pecos Wilderness. In short, it's a U-shaped trail with the western section being the most heavily used by hikers and equestrian users. For those looking for more solitude and perhaps even better views of the surrounding landscape, the eastern section of the Skyline Trail is a great alternative.

My first experience with the eastern section of the Skyline Trail was during a trail clearing project in 2012 with one of our partner groups, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. Their task was to clear a section of the Skyline going north from the Elk Mountain TH at Forest Road 646. My task was to walk ahead and make it obvious where the existing trail corridor was located and to find a water source near Spring Mountain for future trail clearing projects. The trail keeps to the ridge and is for the most part a series of ups and downs flowing over rolling hills allowing a sneak peak of the various distant mountains to the east and west. Approaching Spring Mountain's above-tree line landscape, however, provided the very best views along my hike.

With almost a 360 degree view of peaks in the distance and Texas in the extreme distance, I reconsidered my personal claim that the views on top other peaks like Santa Fe Baldy were some of the best views. From my vantage point on the Skyline, one can see Hermit's Peak, Santa Fe Baldy, Pecos Baldy,

Truchas Peaks, etc. My opportunity for solitude was met during this hike as I saw nobody past where the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps trail crew was hard at work clearing trees.

This past September I had the opportunity to once again venture up to the Skyline Trail for a trail clearing blitz with members of the New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors. Our journey up to the Skyline Trail began at the trailhead for Trail #380, located near the town of Rociada. To say this trail needs work and is rough could be an understatement. However, once we finally made it to the Skyline Trail (elevation: 11,300 ft.) our reward was a gracious view of the mountains in all directions. As with the section from Elk Mountain Trailhead north to Spring Mountain, this section from the junction with the Trail #380 north to Cebolla Mountain generally had little elevation change, minus a few hills that required a little more effort to ascend and descend while watching our footing. Views and solitude, of course, were in abundance along this section.

Availability of water along these two sections is sparse and should be considered when planning your trip. Spring Mountain does have a small trickling spring about ¼ mile northwest of the peak and can be found by walking north



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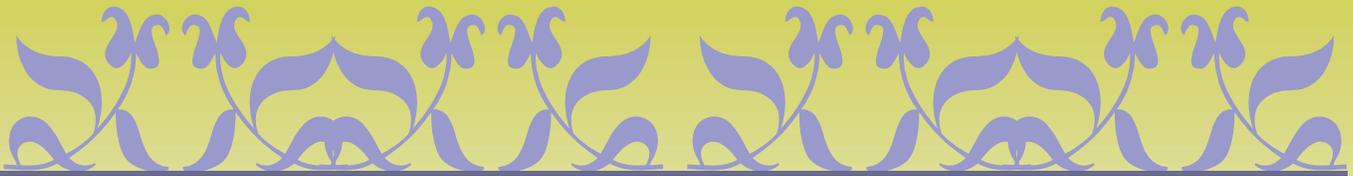
on the Skyline Trail past Spring Mountain until you find a small vertical sign that simply says, "SPG." Of course, this old little tattered sign may not be there now, but it does point down a little narrow path southeast back towards Spring Mountain to the spring. You may need to hunt for the source, but in a good year it's likely to be bubbling. Just before approaching Cebolla Mountain, you'll see a large rock cairn in the distance as you come out of the trees. Before you reach this cairn, there will be a spring. As of September 2013, the report was that of a "gushing" spring. As with any reports of springs, always be prepared and carry extra water or have a Plan B if the water is not flowing at the source.

Best time to visit the eastern Skyline Trail: Summer into early Fall. Always be prepared for any form of precipitation and thunderstorm activity during the mon-

soon season. Stay off exposed ridges during thunderstorms for at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning. Check with the local ranger district office before heading out on your adventure; determine if roads to the trailheads are passable and whether the trail has been cleared recently. Practice Leave No Trace at every turn!



Note: There is a two mile section between the junction of Trail #248 and Trail #250/380 that currently is choked with fallen trees from a previous fire. We hope to have this cleared summer 2014 with the help of New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors and Back Country Horseman.



# Over 10,300 volunteer hours in FY 13!

Built new sections of trail



Maintained existing trail with clearing and tread repair



Picked up a lot of trash



Flagged new trail re-routes

Cleaned up E.V. Long Campground after the September 2013 flooding



Hosted at Forest campgrounds

Built and rehabilitated trail bridges



For this spring newsletter, I had the pleasure of asking the venerable CRAIG MARTIN some questions about his inspiration and experience working trails. Here are his insights. (Julie Dolan)



**Q:** I would like to get an idea of what inspires and motivates you to work on trails?

**A:** I use trails. Every day. Multiple times. Eighteen-hundred miles a year. I walk the dog; go for a bike ride; if there's snow, make parallel tracks; explore the changing seasons; be alone with my thoughts. The beauty of the Los Alamos area is that the trail network is right out my backdoor and extends from there to the summit of the Sierra de los Valles. I can vary my daily treks with a tremendous selection of trips. Even so, when I lose a choice, I feel cheated and I want to get it back as soon as I can. So my most basic motivation for doing trail work is selfish.

But then, trail work is a community event. It pulls together runners, hikers, bike riders, and equestrians and focuses them on a common goal. It helps build community by having all of us see trails from other points of view. That shared outlook is a big reason they lack user conflicts in the Los Alamos area.

Twenty years ago, as the Tuff Riders Mountain Bike Club was starting out, we realized that if we wanted great trails, we had to take some of the responsibility for their maintenance and construction. The County didn't even acknowledge that there were trails on County land, and the Santa Fe National Forest staff and funding was stretched between Los Alamos and the Pecos Wilderness. The club moved to fill the gap with regular trail work sessions.

When Cerro Grande [fire] hit and we were faced with landscape change on a huge but also personal scale, all of us wanted to get into the woods to see what happened and to rebuild trails as quickly as possible. Miles Standish of the Española District and Glenn Ryan from Bandelier National Monument were our mentors, but the drive to rebuild came from the trail users. We've kept that momentum going over the last 13 years.

After helping lead the post-Cerro Grande trail rebuilding effort, I traveled to several other towns in the Southwest that experienced a similar fire that destroyed miles of trails. What I learned from those places is there has to be someone from within the community to stand up and take a leadership role in the rebuilding process. So when the Las Conchas fire put us back to ground zero in several places, I knew that the Los Alamos trail community needed leadership and that everyone would look to me.

**Q:** What your thoughts are on being named "A living treasure?"

**A:** Living treasure: You have to feel honored when your community formally acknowledges your contributions to making it a better place to live in, but wait, I'm not done yet! But in my case, it really isn't a personal acknowledgment. I see it as recognition of the hundreds of students, scouts, church members, adult volunteers and others who have spent time sweating with me in the woods. Together, we have brought back a trail network after two major fires and made it better than it ever was.



insights by CRAIG MARTIN continued.....

**Q:** What does your role as an open space specialist play in the community?

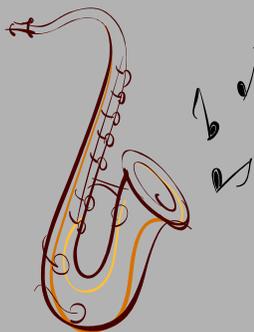
**A:** The rumor that the Open Space Specialist job was created by Los Alamos County just for me isn't true; it had been in the works for several years back in 2003. But there is some truth in that the job description was written based on what people knew I was doing with the Volunteer Task Force in the years after Cerro Grande. I didn't want the job at first, but when I realized I'd be getting paid for what I did for three years as a volunteer, I reconsidered.

It was a good choice. I've spent 10 years improving the local trail network, first catching up on years of routine maintenance, then getting rid of the most obvious unsustainable sections, and finally creating new loop trips by building new trails. Next up is the quest for more trails of the "easy" category (not an easy task in mesa-and-canyon country), linking northern neighborhoods to downtown with a "commuter trail," and placing signage on the trails to improve wayfinding for trail users.

**Q:** Why do you do, what you do ?

**A:** In my spare time on the job, I create maps and trail guides, review post-construction restoration plans, monitor sensitive species, remove invasive species, implement habitat restoration projects, inspect and determine actions for hazard trees, remove graffiti on rocks, maintain plant and animal species lists, monitor conditions of cultural resources, and manage the prescribed fire program for wildland fuel reduction.

The best part of all this is working with youth. When we first started doing trail work with sixth graders at Mountain Elementary, we realized physical labor that produced an immediate and visible product was really exciting to kids. They could instantly see they were making a difference in their community. This was expanded to all the local schools, the Los Alamos Family YMCA's Y Environmental Service Corps, and now the Y's Youth Conservation Corps. The principles are still the same: Teach some basic skills that can be used to help the community reach a goal, give the kids flexibility to have a say in how the goal is achieved, make certain they know how much the community values their work, and show them well-deserved respect for what they do. The result is a group of kids that respect their leaders, respect each other, take pride in their work, and whose work is of excellent quality.



**Q:** Is there something we should know about you that we don't know?

**A:** I used to say what people don't know about me is that I play the saxophone and love jazz, but I blew that one when The Craig Martin Experience started gigging around Los Alamos. I guess it's all out there now.



## Leave No Trace:

### Desert and Canyon Country

As volunteers and stewards of our natural environment, it is important to remember our ethical responsibilities to the beautiful places we visit or are helping to restore. The Center for Outdoor Ethics leave no trace program has a seven principle system to maintain the integrity of our wild lands.

1. **Plan Ahead and Prepare.** Know the area and what to expect. Repackage food, select appropriate equipment. Learn about local ecology.
2. **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.** Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.
3. **Pack it in, Pack it out.** Trash and Garbage.
4. **Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out.** Dispose of human waste properly.
5. **Leave What You Find.** Protect cultural resources. Archaeological artifacts. Avoid damaging live trees and plants.
6. **Minimize Use and Impact of Fires.** When is fire appropriate? In high use areas, use existing fire rings.
7. **Protect and Conserve Water Resources/Respect Wildlife.** Camp away from existing water. Protect riparian corridors. Avoid disturbing wildlife.

## Personal Safety

CHECK IN and CHECKI OUT procedures are an important way we can ensure personal safety. When participating in any kind of volunteer or land stewardship project, make sure you are checking in and checking out with either your volunteer coordinator or a designated volunteer. This involves letting your volunteer coordinator or designated group leader know beforehand and afterward that you are planning to participate, by email or phone. Make sure that your emergency contact or family member has the necessary information on your whereabouts. Let us show you our appreciation for your participation by following the procedures to ensure your personal safety.

### VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER OPPORTUNITY SUMMER 2014

If you are experienced with backcountry camping, backpacking, Leave No Trace, map & compass, and GPS and have a desire to volunteer as a land steward, this may be a great opportunity for you!

The Pecos Wilderness is in need of qualified volunteer wilderness rangers. Duties include making contacts with the public to educate and inform, clearing trails with a crosscut saw, rehabilitating campsites, documenting and/or removing invasive weed species, removing trash, sign inventory and installation as needed, and documenting users. If interested email or call Jennifer Sublett: [jasublett@fs.fed.us](mailto:jasublett@fs.fed.us) or 505-753-7331.

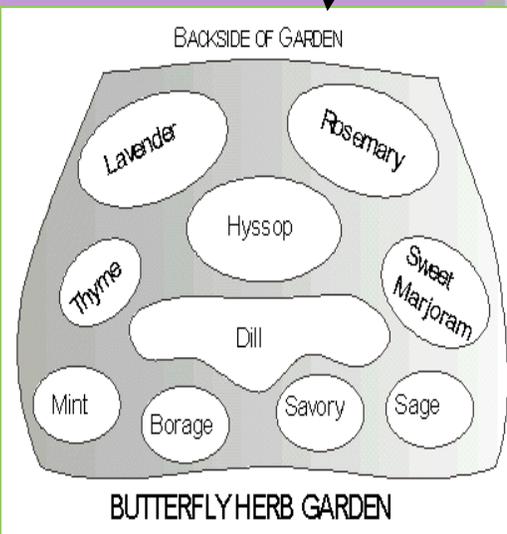
### Why a volunteer agreement?

Volunteering your time on National Forest lands requires a signed volunteer agreement. Through this agreement a volunteer is covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act of 1974. Wearing personal protection equipment like hard hats, safety glasses, long pants, etc. not only makes us look cool in the photos and to passerby trail users, but volunteers uphold their end of the agreement to be safe by wearing PPE and following safety precautions in exchange for a commitment on behalf of the Forest Service to cover them in the event they are injured while volunteering.

## HERB GARDEN

As spring approaches, it is time to start organizing your herb garden. By making a list of herbs that you want to plant, and comparing the time needed to harvest them to the length of your growing season, you can determine if you will need to start your herbs with plants instead of seeds.

Lay out your herb garden on paper before planting anything. This way you can visualize and organize planting based on how much sunlight an area receives and how much drainage the soil has in that area and plant your herb garden accordingly.

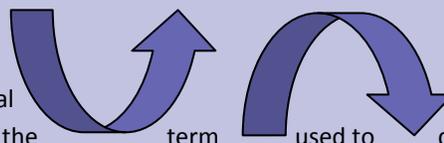


[michigandnr.com](http://michigandnr.com)

## WIND CHILL

According to the NWS (National Weather Service) Wind Chill is the term used to describe the rate of heat lost in the human body resulting from the combined effect of low temperature and wind. As the winds increase, heat is carried away from the body at an increased rate, bringing down both the skin temperature and the internal body temperature. Although exposure to low wind chills can be life threatening to both humans and animals alike, the effect that wind chill has on inanimate objects, such as vehicles, is that it shortens the time that it takes the object to cool to the actual air temperature (it cannot cool the object down below that temperature). You can calculate the wind chill by using either a new wind chill chart or an old wind chill chart, here's a link to both charts and the NWS wind chill calculator .

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/ddc/?n=windchill#New>

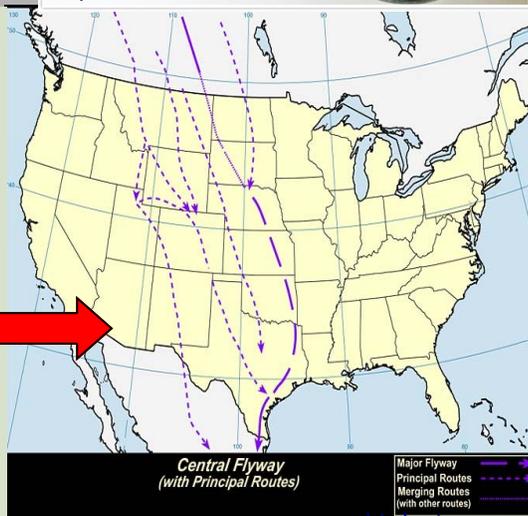


*Create an indoor herb garden with mason jars, coffee cans and even plastic bottles.*



[myhomerocks.com](http://myhomerocks.com)

Recently, if you looked up into the sky over the Bosque and the Rio Grande near La Mesilla/Upper San Pedro area in the late afternoon you would have seen and heard a flock of Canadian Geese. The geese are using the Central Flyway, a migratory bird flyway that the majority of the birds that use it make direct north and south journeys from breeding grounds in the North to winter quarters in the South. In February Sandhill Cranes will start migrating north, also.



[birdnature.com](http://birdnature.com)