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Community-Public Land Stewardship INITIATIVES

A periodical publication from the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College

FALL 2000

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Workshop seeks ideas for creating a San Juan Mountain research center

On August 9 and 10 this year, 25 researchers, public land managers, and educators met in Durango to brainstorm the creation of an institute devoted exclusively to research and education in the San Juan Mountains.

The workshop had two goals: to identify the types of research a center of its kind would do and strategies for conducting research. The second was to begin identifying the center's educational aspects.

Workshop coordinator and Fort Lewis College Professor Rob Blair told participants that the proposed center would fill a niche that other research centers don't fill. Primarily the center will serve as a clearinghouse for the massive amount of data being generated from research conducted in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado. It would also promote new research, a topic that many workshop participants welcomed.

The center will span not only the biological aspects of mountain research, but also the human, Blair said. For example, a recent study was completed on the effects of snowmobiles on Molas Pass, a particularly timely report when the high-altitude area is reaching critical numbers of recreationists.

During the workshop, participants discussed goals for the center and ways to coordinate archiving and making research information available. There was strong acceptance of the idea for creating a digital library that archives the

data and that is accessible to various users.

Defining the center's physical space was also discussed. Whether it would be a field station, a laboratory, or both, with an office or without, was explored. For some time now, Silverton Colorado, nestled in a high-altitude valley in the San Juans near the headwaters of the Animas River, has been viewed as an ideal location for many of the center's functions.

Community partnership opportunities were also discussed as a positive use of the San Juan Mountains Research Center. Locating the center in Silverton also is an opportunity to help the town rebound from the loss of its main industry, mining, early last decade.

"So far I have only received positive feedback," Blair said about the response to the workshop. "I think the first day opened a few eyes to the potential value of a mountain institute and the second day produced excellent ideas that will guide us in the next phase."

After the workshop, Blair said he will recommend to Fort Lewis College President Kendall Blanchard to form a working group that can help gather information, oversee the establishment of an institute, and prepare funding initiatives.

For more information about the workshop and the outcome of discussion, contact Rob Blair at (970) 247-7263, or Ken Francis at the Office of Community Services, 247-7310.

Service helps towns prepare for fire

Given the wildfire situation existing in much of the West, it might be appropriate to mention the *Firewise* program that focuses on building community based wildfire protection programs and projects that “fit” local situations. *Firewise* is sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association, the federal natural resource agencies, the National Association of State Foresters and a number of private corporations interested in reducing fire losses to people and the land.

Firewise has developed a computer based fire analysis process that allows people in communities at risk from wildfire to use the latest remote sensing resource information to assess their risk of wildfire loss, and then look at a number of options for reducing risk. Local people can determine the level of wildfire protection they believe is appropriate and build specific actions to reach their objectives.

The *Firewise* tools are available to community groups willing to sponsor the project at little or no cost, except for personal time and effort.

Take a look at <http://www.firewise.org/communities> for more information about how to bring this initiative to your area.

—John F. Marker, *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*

Kids “Grab a Tool and Get a Life!”

This summer’s wildfires are a wake up call to the West’s communities where many are wondering how to reduce fire risks. The Southwest Youth Corps offers one idea. The Four Corners-based non-profit plans to operate a fire and fuels reduction crew of 18-24 year olds next year.

“They will be red carded, chainsaw certified, and receive all necessary training,” said Executive Director Shannon Manfredi, who added that the Corps members will also assist with prescribed burns during the spring and fall, then as a standing workforce for summer wildfires.

SYC employs young adults aged 16-24 in a residential work program that teaches them outdoor and life-building skills. So far this year, SYC’s third, 40 kids have completed the eight-week program. In a move towards year-round programming, Ms. Manfredi has recruited 20 new members for this fall’s work schedules.

The kids are recruited from high schools, youth services, juvenile diversion programs, and other sources. Much of the work is done on public lands in partnership with state and federal agencies.

Ms. Manfredi said SYC is looking for partners and resources to support the fuels reduction program, such as skilled, trained firefighters to serve as crew bosses, and area vocational schools with related programs.

For more information, to hire a crew, refer young adults to the program, or even visit crews in the field, contact Southwest Youth Corps, PO Box 2704, Durango, CO 81302; 970-884-2758; syc@tricorners.net.

DISCOVERIES

OCS Web Site Is Now On-line

It’s not exactly a grand discovery, but it is the first full-blown Web site the Office of Community Services has ever had. It is packed with detailed information about each of our four current program areas and the many projects that fall within focus of each. The site offers visitors a way to order OCS reports, papers, newsletters and such which were produced through its projects.

The good thing about our new site is that it helps visitors understand better what OCS does, what we want to do, and for whom we do it. You can easily contact us, too, with a click of your mouse. Check us out at:

<http://ocs.fortlewis.org>

Our address is one of the newer ones, so you don’t have to type in “www” in the URL address.

Community-based EPA News On-Line tells local stories

Community Based Environmental Protection News On-Line is a periodic electronic information bulletin from EPA’s Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. It offers features, news, a list of conferences, books, and reports.

One useful feature are the *Other Resources* section that directs CBEP visitors to such sources of information as a sustainable business Web site. Many sites are of organizations in local areas whose stories offer insights into issues of people and landscape. The current issue contains a story about efforts to clean up mine contamination in the Cheat River, the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi. It’s author, University of Colorado professor, Dr. Toddi Stevenson, reports progress through grassroots organizing.

You can subscribe or send submissions by contacting the editor, Jerry Filbin, at:

filbin.gerald@epa.gov.

Past issues can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity/cbepnews>.

Site stewards answering the call to protect Navajo and Puebloan ruins in New Mexico

Thieves of Time, Watch Out!

Beware ye looters of archaeological sites! Ye pilferers of artifacts! The *New Mexico Site Stewards* are on patrol.

Since last February, when 30 citizens from northwest New Mexico and southwest Colorado gathered at Salmon Museum in Bloomfield, New Mexico for the first training of the New Mexico Site Stewards Program, the stewards have been sending a message to looters of archaeological and historic sites.

Thrilled by the turnout of residents to protect and monitor sites in northwestern New Mexico, project director Teri Paul says, “The fact that there is so much enthusiasm from local communities for the program indicates that people value our cultural heritage sites and want to do something to protect them.”

In the Four Corners’ remote canyons and mesas, individual pot-hunters and large-scale artifact dealers are digging up the past and causing a lot of damage. But citizen action teams monitoring and acting as guardian angels for sites are fast becoming accepted and popular ways to partner with public-land managers to promote preservation and protection of the cultural heritage that the archaeological sites represent.

During the four months that the site stewards have been patrolling in the Navajo Pueblitos on BLM lands near Bloomfield, two incidents of looting and vandalism have been reported to law enforcement officials.

Sites are always subject to looting, but also to natural deterioration from weather and animal activity, and from being “loved to death” by well-meaning visitors who don’t know how to treat them. As ambassadors for public lands, the site stewards monitor site conditions and educate visitors in site etiquette. They teach



More than 30 volunteers trained with the New Mexico Site Stewards Program before taking monitoring and interpretation trips to several Navajo Pueblitos in Gobernador Canyon on Bureau of Land Management lands near Bloomfield. In its first year, the program is the first of its kind in the Four Corners, but another based in southwest Colorado is not far behind.

leave no trace: don’t walk on, stand on, or lean against walls; don’t move or remove artifacts; don’t touch rock art so the oils in fingers won’t cause fragile paintings and carvings to deteriorate; leave only footprints, take only pictures.

The Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College recently awarded the New Mexico Site Stewards Program a small grant to print educational brochures that stewards can offer to visitors during their backcountry monitoring trips. The money comes from dollars OCS received from the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service to address tourism development in the Four Corners rural towns.

This fall, the New Mexico Site Stewards Program will further develop educational outreach with slide shows and presentations to local schools, and community and business groups. For more information please visit the Web site at <http://www.nmstewards.org>, or call Teri Paul at 505-632-2013.

NEW MEXICO SITE STEWARDS PROGRAM

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Go ahead. Take your hike. It's good for you.

THE ANIMAS RIVER TRAIL in Durango, Colorado skirts Rotary Park and its pictureque gazebo as it makes its trek from the outskirts through the center of town. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the feeling of being in Durango and its surrounding views seen from the eight-mile long trail.

Everybody's talking trails. Virtually every community in Colorado's southwest corner is planning or building a recreational trail system. Why? Because towns with hiking and bicycling trails are more livable. Moreover, trails also boost communities economically, aesthetically, and environmentally.

The most popular single recreation activity in the United States is walking, according to the authors of *Outdoor Recreation in American Life*. More than 100 million Americans walk two to three times a week, they say. This fact suggests that there is little argument that trails make a town more livable, whether you use them to walk or bicycle to work, or to walk the dog afterwards.

Karen Nozik, director of policy outreach for the Rails-to-Trails Council, a national non-profit dedicated to preserving historic railroad beds, puts it bluntly. "Bicyclists and pedestrians are the indicator species of livable communities," she says. "Cities that are bicycle-friendly and walkable, those with trails and trail systems, are healthier communities."

If incorporating greenways and recreational trails into your community's infrastructure sounds like a good idea, the following descriptions of their benefits should help you learn more about why communities in southwest Colorado find them so appealing.

The Economic Benefits

Trails and greenways save money. They make up a non-motorized transportation system that is cleaner, cheaper to build, and cheaper to maintain.

Trails and greenways also attract money. In southwest Colorado where tourism and recreation are synonymous with economic development, a trail system makes a town more attractive to vacationers, many of whom really want to know our communities up close and personal.

Visitors are especially attracted if trails connect towns to public lands. For example, Rico Town Manager Eric Heil recently mapped nearby national forest trails that he hopes will eventually connect town and the San Juan National Forest with itinerary-building options for visitors. Heil says the idea of providing tools that make it easier for visitors to hike or cross-country ski and savor Rico's small, mountain-town atmosphere is so welcome locally that residents, town leaders, and business owners are ready to volunteer year-round labor to maintain routes.

The Aesthetic Benefits

Not only do trails cost less to build than auto routes, they also take up less room, leaving space for the natural world to take its place in the community's overall infrastructure. Many Americans like immersing themselves in a natural setting, an experience which trails offer. Visitors also get to know

your town with a personal touch—who you are, how you live, what you think is important about the place in which you live and how the infrastructure speaks for your environmental values. Whether you are a resident or a visitor, hiking through town gives you a special feeling that reflects the value the community places on nature.

The Environmental Benefits

Many people cringe when they hear the word environmental. But it doesn't always mean extremist views. It simply means a host of quality of life amenities that more people seek in their community. For example, when people are walking or bicycling more, they are driving less. This means less air pollution. It also means healthier and happier people.

Trails are safer, too, protected from dangerous high-speed auto corridors. This is particularly important to families with small children and infants, residents, and vacationers alike.

Historic Preservation

Community trails systems are often associated with historic preservation and interpretation. For example, Aztec, New Mexico, is planning a trails system along canals that surround town. The canals are part of the historic landscape, and many people want to see them preserved as part of a trail maintenance program.

The canals are not officially open to public use, but people use them all the time anyway, says Office of Community Services Landscape Architect James Dietrich, who has been helping to map the canals and trails, and negotiate easements for canal-side trails.

"I'd like to see the same thing with irrigation canals in Cortez and Towaoc," James says. "They're just great pedestrian pathways and the infrastructure's already there."

Trail Building Equals Community Building

Another salient feature of the trail building trend in southwest Colorado is the formation of partnerships to develop community trails and greenways. They are as beneficial to the community as the trails themselves. Trails bring people closer physically, but by cooperatively finding and contributing resources to build them, partners draw closer in spirit in cultivating an essential component of any community—caring, involved residents.

It makes sense to people in Dove Creek, for example, for the school district and town to join in rehabilitating a community center and tennis courts, and build a new school on adjacent properties owned by those two entities. The disrepair of the existing facilities begs for people to come together in that small town where resources are scarce.

A centerpiece to discussions so far is support for a trail that links the two separately owned properties, then extends to Dove Creek itself and outward into the community. County property is adjacent, too, and Dolores County officials want to be involved for potential future opportunities.

It is collaboration that breathes fresh air into the nuts and bolts of mapping, funding, and constructing trails. This is particularly appealing to the Office of Community Services, which devotes resources in its Technical Assistance program to support efforts in towns. The TA program itself results from a partnership between Fort Lewis College and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

The timing is good for developing trails, says James Dietrich. "Trails are our most historic form of travel, but they have been getting pushed out by auto ways," he says. "I'd like to see that attitude be turned around."

It looks like many southwest Colorado citizens are already beating him to it.

—Tim Richard

***Rail-Volution
2000:
Building Livable
Communities
with Transit***

**October 4-9, 2000
Denver, CO**

**Telephone:
1-800-788-7077**

**Email:
convene@aol.com**

**Web site:
www.railvolution.com**

***Community-Public
Lands Stewardship
Initiatives*** is a periodic newsletter prepared at the Office of Community Services, Fort Lewis College, 1000 Rim Drive, Durango, Colorado 81301.
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The Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College assists rural communities, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations with planning and community development projects. It facilitates and coordinates projects in land-use planning, historic preservation, public policy, and human services. OCS builds partnerships that are inclusive and participatory, that value community heritage and ecosystem stewardship. It also offers Fort Lewis College students educational opportunities as assistants in its programs and projects.

Silverton defies a past of transient economies to find deeper roots into the San Juan Mts.

In America's past, towns have come and gone as their inhabitants followed the natural resource extraction industries. In southwest Colorado, mining towns such as Ironton, Red Mountain, and Parrot City sprouted and wilted long ago in the wake of the mining era.

Then there are the towns that survived the century—not by chance, but by the determination it takes to weather geographic and

economic isolation.

Towns like Silverton, Colorado. Since the shutdown of its last working mine less than 10 years ago,

Silverton residents have been challenged to continue on without the not-so-secure security of a one-industry town.

You need to care about what you do in order to do it well—a simple notion, one perhaps easily overlooked and taken for granted by successful towns like Durango, Telluride, and Cortez. But not by Silverton residents—such as Bev Rich, Bill Norman, Willy Tookey, and Fritz Klinke—who are unwilling *not* to call Silverton home, where out of a boom and bust history and transient economies, they have cultivated a sense of permanence, sinking roots in the hard rock of an obscure valley along the banks of the Animas River, El Rio de las Animas Perdidos, the River of Lost Souls.

Was it only the ore in the mines that made staying worthwhile? Was it just that there was work to keep the town going until 1992 when, finally, the ore wasn't worth the effort of extracting it? Or was it the people, the place?

The pride of Silvertonians to rebound from the mine closing is akin to the sense of purpose one must possess to chip, drill, wrench, haul, crush, melt, spin, and separate ounces of pure metal from tons of pure stone sunk deep within the unrelenting confines of the San Juan Mountains. An environment so unforgiving it has sparked imagination, imagination that has sparked invention, invention of firsts: the first town west of the Mississippi to use alternating current electricity, along with Telluride; experimentation with innovative tower and cable systems to transport ore-bearing rock across otherwise unnavigable mountain gulches. Problem solving in an inhospitable environment.

After 1992, the people of Silverton, possessed of the stuff that miners and mountains are made of, met a stronger match. Tourism, which once played second fiddle to mining, became the only game in town. It tried to replace the hard-work routine of mining. Little help, though. About 250,000 people come to Silverton on the renowned Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, only to turn around and

leave after buying a few curios and perhaps a burger with fries and a coke.

Silverton doesn't regularly thrill many train riders into staying

a night in its hundred-year-old structures. In a town with too few residents, with too few children to keep the school open, with too few of the accoutrements that define a town, the question now is whether imagination will once again spark imagination.

But with beautiful scenery, abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, and, of course, a mining and railroad heritage, the community is blessed with resources that can help it survive one more swing of the economic pendulum.

Recently, the community has undertaken several projects to preserve and share its heritage, develop attractions, and make the community more appealing. The Old Hundred Mine Tour, the Mayflower Mill Tour, an attractive and visible visitor center, and stabilization of historic structures at Animas Forks are illustrative. So is the recent spate of music festivals beginning to enliven the town's annual activities.

This year, the San Juan County Historical Society began building the San Juan Mining Heritage and Interpretive Center. Located at Courthouse Square the facility will house mining artifacts and displays that chronicle the not-so-distant history. The Office of Community Services is recommending that \$10,000 of Gateway Sustainable Tourism Initiative funds provided in part by the San Juan National Forest, and \$40,000 of National Scenic Byway funding for the San Juan Skyway be budgeted to assist with building the center.

We'll be watching for the latest development in Silverton, but we're not worried. No one's going anywhere.

—Tim Richard

The pride of Silvertonians . . . must be akin to the sense of purpose one must possess to chip, drill, wrench, haul, crush, melt, spin, and separate ounces of pure metal from tons of pure stone sunk deep within the unrelenting confines of the San Juan Mountains.

Can we construct an applied research agenda for community-based stewardship of public lands?

Community-based collaboration, community forestry, and community-based ecosystem management are some of the terms used to describe efforts to

reconnect people with public land planning, management, conservation, and restoration. With the recognition of the importance and potential success of these collaborative stewardship initiatives, the need for evaluative and applied research processes has also emerged. Notable among these is the workshop held at the Udall Center, University of Arizona, which produced *Assessing Research Needs: A Summary of a Workshop on Community-Based Collaboratives* (Ann Moote et al., June 2000, Udall Center Publication 00-5).

Follow-up leadership to formulate a concise research agenda is being provided by a steering group coordinated through the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia. Alongside these efforts, involving some of the same players, the Lead Partnership Group recently listed 20 principles of community-based forestry (LPG newsletter, Summer 2000, p. 2). While these are not the only attempts to better understand and evaluate contributions made by collaborative and place-based stewardship coalitions and partnerships, they are indicative.

Some questions being proposed look at the character and processes of collaboration, such as whether appropriate conservation goals, decision-making tools, diversity, and legitimacy are present within community- and place-based stewardship. Other questions focus on the costs and benefits of community stewardship in comparison to more traditional agency- and public policy-driven methods of land management.

Throughout contemporary discussions, there are questions about the true effectiveness of alternative, or non-institutional, approaches to ecosystem improvements, their accountability to national interests and local communities, and how they should or should not be embraced by land management agencies.

A range of concerns exists about “measurable environmental results,” effective group dynamics, and organizational sustainability. Apprehensions in some quarters exist alongside deeply held beliefs that community-based efforts hold the keys to renewed “commitment to environmental health and social well-being,” and that “it is in the regional and national interest to support local capacity for stewardship” (LPG newsletter, Summer 2000)

The formulation of an appropriate research agenda needs to be realistically linked to the imperatives and challenges in implementing community- and place-based stewardship. The research and evaluation questions of greatest stewardship utility should be asked, the most serious challenges to success should be addressed expeditiously, and stories of community and ecosystem improvements should be told in authentic and practical terms through which people can relate, understand, and participate in practical and responsible land stewardship.

To recommend or comment about priorities for an applied research

agenda for collaborative stewardship processes, please contact Tim Richard or Sam Burns (*Community-Public Land Stewardship Initiatives*, Office of Community Services, Fort Lewis College, 81301, (970) 247-7066). Commentary articles are invited for publication in future issues of the *Initiatives*.

—Sam Burns

For those already part of the dialogue about the benefits and research needs of collaborative-, or community-based, stewardship, and for those wanting additional debate and commentary, we offer the following framework:

- What questions should we be asking about the stewardship movement?
- What do we need to understand about the organizational makeup of partnerships or coalitions?
- Do we need better conceptual models of what they are and how they operate in order to assist communities wanting to participate?
- Should research focus on collaborative ecosystem restoration methods—finding common-ground solutions to scientific and economic problems, such as stewardship management plans, all-party monitoring, and value-added product development?
- Are there broad institutional and policy questions to be answered that can strengthen formal civic mandates to guide community and regional participation in public lands planning and management?
- What about the agencies being asked to join in alternative stewardship approaches? What help do they need to build capacity to integrate community knowledge, build legitimate and accountable civic relationships, and reduce internal barriers to new participatory citizenship and stewardship initiatives that could enhance ecosystem and community well-being?

Calendar

[Some conference information excerpted from Aspen Institute's *Rural Update* on-line newsletter: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/csg/csg_jun00.asp]

TOOLS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP BUILDING NEW ECONOMIES IN RURAL AMERICA

Appalachian Regional Commission
Sept 17-19, 2000

Batavia (Cincinnati) OH
Deann Reed Greathouse, (202) 884-7786
<http://www.arc.gov/conference.htm>

RURAL TELECON '00

October 1-4, 2000, Aspen Institute
Aspen, CO

Toni Black, Colorado Mountain College, (800) 621-8559 ext. 8365; <http://ruraltelecon.org>

BUILDING COMMUNITIES FROM THE

INSIDE OUT: Putting "ABCD" Into Action

The Asset-Based Community Dev't Institute

Oct 12-14, 2000

Savannah, GA

Donna Moore — (912) 236-2080;
henry636@bellsouth.net

HELPING SMALL TOWNS SUCCEED

Heartland Center for Leadership Development

Oct 19-23, 2000

Jackson Hole, WY

(800) 927-1115, (402) 474-7672 fax

<http://www.4w.com/heartland>

10TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NAT'L

NETWORK OF FOREST PRACTITIONERS

October 25-29

Fairlee, VT

Sarah Carrier — (617) 338-7821

sarah@nnfp.org

BEYOND BOUNDARIES: GRASSROOTS TO

GLOBAL: Year 2000 Nat'l Rural Community

Assistance Partnership Conference

Oct. 28-Nov. 3

Stowe, VT

Economic Dev't Council of N. Vermont

(802) 524-4546

<http://222.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/>

GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION: Promoting

Participation in Community Development —

Models, Methods and Best Practices

Nov 30 - Dec 2

Knoxville, TN

Tony Hebert, Participatory Development

Program — (423) 974-4562

<http://www.ra.utk.edu/cpc/>

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