Field Operations Center Open for Business

A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO, the idea of a permanent facility to house the vast array of equipment used to maintain and improve The Colorado Trail was just a dream. Then, as Trail volunteers have done for the past 40 years, they dug in, and today the George Miller Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs is a reality.

Although a formal dedication ceremony won’t be held until June 2 (see inset for details), the facility is already fulfilling its role as the hub of CT field operations – and it’s all due to the generous support of a few major benefactors and hundreds of other contributors who provided the funding to push the project to completion.

At a cost of more than a half-million dollars, it is the largest single project ever undertaken by The Colorado Trail Foundation.

“The new FOC will help ensure that the CT will maintain its status as a premier long-distance hiking, biking and riding trail for generations to come.”

FOC Dedication Set for June 2

Join us for the dedication of the George Miller Field Operations Center on Saturday, June 2. The ceremony will begin at 11:00 and we’ll keep the facility open until around 2:00.

Colorado Trail Foundation staff and board of directors, major donors, and representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, the town of Poncha Springs, and the general contractor, Diesslin Structures Inc., are expected to attend. Light refreshments will be served and both FOC buildings will be open for viewing.

The operations center is located at 122 Halley’s Ave. in Poncha Springs (two blocks from the intersection of U.S. Highways 50 and 285).
WE’VE GOT A LOT TO SMILE ABOUT THESE DAYS HERE AT COLORADO TRAIL

HEADQUARTERS: Winter is waning and trail season is fast approaching. The Board of Directors gathered in Golden in early February and we all agreed that the state of The Colorado Trail Foundation is great. Also in February, dozens of volunteers gathered to stuff envelopes with 2018 trail crew information at our biggest mailing party of the year – and wrapped it up in near record time.

But, clearly, our happiest news is that our new George Miller Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs is done in time to serve trail crews this summer. Perfect timing, given that this will be one of the busiest seasons we’ve seen in several years.

A big part of my job as executive director is to make sure the organization maintains its firm financial footing. We do that in part by soliciting grants from businesses and groups that support our mission. More each year comes from the sale of Trail merchandise at our online store. Profits from our trekking program and program funding from U.S. Forest Service are important as well. But it is the individual contributions, large and small, from hundreds of CT supporters – we call them “Friends” – each year that are the bedrock of our success. It is those same supporters who made the construction of the Field Operations Center possible.

More often than not when we appeal to your generosity it is so we can simply continue our mission of maintaining and improving the Trail. So it is thrilling to be able say this time: “Come join us on June 2 in Poncha Springs and see what you helped us build: a permanent facility that will ensure The Colorado Trail is around for people to enjoy far into the future.”

If you’ve ever worked on a Colorado Trail crew you’ll see some familiar sights, including our equipment and water tank trailers and the myriad equipment needed to support those crews. You’re sure to see some familiar faces, too: CTF staff, board members, trail crew leaders, and your fellow volunteers. You might even see longtime Operations Manager George Miller – unless he’s too busy putting the finishing touches on the facility that bears his name.

If you know me, you know that even though we have completed this monumental task, it has only fueled my passion for making the Trail the best it can be. I hope you’ll join me in that quest.

See you in Poncha Springs!

WooHoo!!

Bill Manning
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ADOPT A PIECE OF THE COLORADO TRAIL

Would you like a section of The Colorado Trail to call your own?

That’s what our Volunteer Trail Adopters do: claim “ownership” of a part of the trail to oversee and maintain, while keeping The Colorado Trail Foundation apprised about trail conditions and potential problems. Many trail crews begin with an Adopter report regarding trail erosion, bridge damage, and other concerns.

Field Operations Manager Brent Adams foresees a need for as many as a dozen new Adopters this season as some longtime Adopters retire and others become inactive.

As an Adopter, you commit to caring for one of 80 Adopt-a-Trail sections ranging in length from 1.6 to 16.8 miles. Adams attempts to assign sections based on an Adopter’s proximity to the area. Responsibilities include performing basic trail maintenance, such as clearing out drainage features, removing downed trees across the Trail, and doing minor maintenance at the beginning of the season and later in the year if needed. Adopters file a report on the CTF website at least annually regarding the work they have done and status of their section. Tools and training are provided.

If you are interested in becoming an Adopter, please contact Brent Adams at brent@ColoradoTrail.org.
Put a start and finish line anywhere in the world and someone will try to become the fastest to cover the distance between those two points. The Colorado Trail is no different.

The Colorado Trail Foundation neither encourages such activities nor keeps records of such endeavors – we advise users to take the Trail at a more leisurely pace to better enjoy all it has to offer – but we recognize that the swift of foot (or horse or bike) will always be with us.

This past season we saw two impressive accomplishments on the Trail:

— Erie, Colo., ultrarunner Bryan Williams broke the known record time for a supported solo thru-run of the Trail, completing the 485 miles between Denver and Durango in eight days and 30 minutes. That’s a bit more than seven hours faster than the previous record-holder, Scott Jaime, of Highlands Ranch, Colo.

— Five runners from Durango completed the first-ever round-the-clock relay run on the Trail, finishing in three days, 15 hours and 54 minutes.

Williams’ run started at the Trail’s southern terminus near Durango at 5 a.m. on Aug. 26, according to the Longmont Times-Call, and finished outside Denver at 5:30 a.m. on Sept. 3. He began his run with fellow distance runner Eric Truhe, of Lafayette, Colo., but Truhe had to drop out midway due to an injury.

Williams, 42, told the Times-Call that he began running seriously seven years ago. He has since completed nine 100-mile races and 21 other ultra-races. He and Truhe conceived the plan of running the CT in one go in 2015 and have been running sections of it together since then. Last August, they completed the Trail’s 163-mile Collegiate Loop in 62 hours and 47 minutes, which they believe is a record.

“It really was a team effort,” Truhe told the Times-Call. “None of this would have happened if it wasn’t for the amazing crew we had of friends that were out there every day for us.” That crew included Williams’ girlfriend, Emily Booth; Truhe’s father, Marv; friends Don Shires and Bryan Boots; and Williams’ running coach, Cindy Stonemith. Runners and crew alike got only three to four hours of sleep a night throughout.

According to the Times-Call, on the morning of the last day, the crew told Williams he would need to run 89 miles in 29 hours to hit Jaime’s record. Williams ran it in 24 hours, 15 minutes.

Friends accompanied him the last six miles in the dark. When he at last saw the Junction Creek Trailhead sign marking the end of the Trail, he said he felt sentimental and sore. “I remember saying, ‘I think I want to sit down now,’” he said.

The five Durango runners – Tate Lagasca, 23; Holden Rennaker, 26; Kyle Curtin, 30; Shaun Burke, 30; and Brett Sublett, 31 – began their relay at midnight on Sept. 7 at Waterton Canyon, the Trail’s northern terminus, according to the Durango Herald. They used a two-car shuttle to switch runners along the route.

“It was like a game of leap frog,” Curtin told the Herald.

The group finished on the afternoon of Sept. 10. Curtin ran 108 miles during the three-plus-day ordeal, Rennaker 106 miles, Lagasca 101 miles, Burke 100 miles, and Sublett 70 miles. In a bit of understatement, Lagasca commented, “It was hard.”

Sublett told the Herald that one of the reasons they organized the relay run was in the hope that it would kick-start a friendly competition between other trail running towns. “We’re hoping it inspires people to try and beat that,” he said.

(For the record, the reported record completion time for a mountain biker is three days, 20 hours and 46 minutes.)
THE 2018 COLORADO TRAIL CREW SCHEDULE looks a little different this year, with backpacking crews outnumbering drive-in crews for the first time in many years. But don’t let that deter you: Most of the backpack crews involve hiking short distances with moderate climbs.

The number of volunteer opportunities has increased this year, too, with 21 crews ranging from one to eight days. Something for everyone!

As Field Operations Manager Brent Adams notes, the need for more backpacking crews is reflective of the fact that most of the trail building and maintenance work near trailheads and other CT access points has been completed, requiring The Colorado Trail Foundation to turn its attention to more remote areas.

Work in some areas was requiring increasingly longer hikes to work sites, he says, so hiking in and setting up camp for a few days will give volunteers more time to do trail work.

Adams, who will lead all four one-day crews with his wife, Anne Englert, says five new leaders have volunteered to take crews out this year: Bob Mathes, Greg Speights, Diana Bristol, Dave Fitzwater and Phil Ayers. They join three new leaders from last year to greatly expand the CTF’s capabilities to do work on the CT, he says.

Special thanks this year goes to the Tenth Mountain Division Hut Association for donating five nights in Uncle Bud’s Hut, north of Turquoise Lake, for a crew of 16, and the Leadville Trail 100 Legacy Foundation for providing materials for a new bridge on Boswell Creek.

Trail crew information was mailed out in February (and is available at ColoradoTrail.org), but here is a quick recap:

**CREW 0118** (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), BOSWELL CREEK
May 31-June 3 (4-day), led by Bob Mathes will build a new bridge over Boswell Creek on the south side of Twin Lakes in Segment CW01.

**CREW 0218** (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), WEST BEAR CREEK
June 7-10 (4-day), led by Greg Speights will construct drains and check steps and de-berm tread to improve drainage on an eroding section of trail 3 miles from Strontia Dam in Segment 1.

**CREW 0318** (Basecamp, high-clearance vehicles), BLANKS CABIN
June 9-16 (8-day), led by John and Elayna Lipe, will construct two turnpikes through muddy sections of the trail and repairing buck-and-rail fencing in Segment 14.

**CREW 0418** (One-day, 2-wheel-drive), GOLD HILL
June 23, led by Brent Adams and Anne Englert, will work on drainage on this popular section of the CT near Breckenridge in Segment 7.

**CREW 0518** (Women-only, basecamp, 2-wheel-drive), SHEEP GULCH
June 23-25 (3-day), led by Cindy Johnson, will clean and construct drains and build check steps in Sheep Gulch below Hope Pass in Segment CW01.

**CREW 0618** (Basecamp, 2-wheel-drive), SOUTH COTTONWOOD CREEK
June 28-July 1 (4-day), led by Diana Bristol, will help construct a 400-foot realignment and drains to improve an entrenched and eroding section of the CT in Segment 13.

**CREW 0718** (One-day, 2-wheel drive), MITCHELL CREEK
June 30, led by Brent Adams and Anne Englert, will construct and maintain drainage structures north of Tennessee Pass in Segment 8.

**CREW 0818** (Backpack, high-clearance vehicle), SAN LUIS PASS
July 7-13 (7-day), led by Loren Woods, will continue prior years’ work constructing and maintaining drains and clearing corridor in the remote La Garita Wilderness near San Luis Pass in Segments 20-21.

**CREW 0918** (Basecamp, high-clearance vehicle), HANCOCK
July 7-July 14 (8-day), led by Scott Smith and Laura Brieser-Smith, will continue building new trail above the old railroad grade near the ghost town of Hancock to move the trail off of a 4-wheel-drive road in Segment CW04.

**CREW 1018** (Basecamp, high-clearance vehicle), LUJAN PASS
July 14-21 (8-day), led by Dave Fitzwater, will construct check dams and drains to improve eroded sections on one of the less visited portions of the CT/CDT between Lujan Pass and Razor Creek in Segment 17.

**CREW 1118** (Backpack, high-clearance vehicle), ILLINOIS CREEK
July 21-25 (5-day), led by Doug Buttery, will continue building new trail in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness to move the trail off of the motorized Timberline Trail in Segment CW02.

**CREW 1218** (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), AVALANCHE GULCH
July 21-27 (7-day), led by Loren Woods, will construct drains and check steps on eroded sections of trail and re-bench tread where it has narrowed in Segment 13.

**CREW 1318** (One-day, 2-wheel-drive), KENOSHA PASS
July 28, led by Brent Adams and Anne Englert, will continue past efforts to build and maintain drainage structures east of Kenosha Pass.

**CREW 1418** (Backpack, high-clearance vehicle, ILLINOIS CREEK
July 28-Aug 3 (7-day), led by Dave Landers, see description for Crew 1118.
CREW 1518 (Basecamp, 4-wheel-drive), PORCUPINE GULCH
July 29-Aug. 2 (5-day), led by Glenn Kepler, will construct drains and check steps on entrenched and eroding sections of trail at the head of Porcupine Gulch in Segment 9. Lodging will be at Uncle Bud’s Hut.

CREW 1618 (Basecamp, high-clearance vehicle), MINERS CREEK
Aug. 4-8 (5-day), led by Bill Carpenter, will construct a small replacement bridge and urgently needed drains where the CT/CDT passes through the 2017 Peak 2 fire burn area in Segment 7.

CREW 1718 (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), CATARACT CREEK
Aug. 4-10 (7-day), led by Paul Smith, will work to improve drainage on eroding sections of the CT/CDT near Kokomo Pass in Segment 8.

CREW 1818 (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), STRAIGHT CREEK
Aug. 11-17 (7-day), led by Phil Ayers, will reconstruct approximately 800 feet of entrenched, fall-line trail below Blackhawk Pass in Segment 26.

CREW 1918 (One-day, 2-wheel-drive), CREE AND LOST CREEKS
Aug. 19, led by Brent Adams and Anne Englert, will build a replacement bridge over Cree Creek and install a culvert and rebuild the crossing at Lost Creek in Segment 14.

CREW 2018 (Backpack, 2-wheel-drive), TENMILE RANGE
Aug. 24-26 (3-day), led by Cindy Johnson, will complete drainage work at and above timberline on the west side of the Tenmile Range in Segment 7.

CREW 2118 (BACKPACK, 4-WHEEL-DRIVE), SOUTH CLEAR CREEK
Aug. 25-31 (7-day), led by Paul Smith, will build a 10-foot log bridge and connect trail at a problematic stream crossing in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness near Lake Ann and the Three Apostles in Segment CW02.
It’s the question on every Colorado Trail user’s mind:  
What’s the weather going to be like today?

We can’t guarantee sunny and no rain, but today there are more options than ever to help you determine how to dress for your outing and what to be prepared for – assuming you have Internet access and a device to access it – or when to begin the thru-hike or ride you’ve long been planning.

Those options include our own ColoradoTrail.org website, social media, and a new site developed by a CT thru-hiker that enables users to find current conditions at dozens of spots along the Trail with just one click.

The Colorado Trail Foundation’s website, ColoradoTrail.org, has long been the go-to site for all of the planning needs of CT users. On the home page, under “Trip Planning” on the lefthand menu, click on “Snow and Weather.” There you’ll find links to the latest snow-depth and weather reports for various segments of the Trail.

The general rule is that the Trail is mostly snow-free by July 1, but that can vary by two or three weeks either way depending on a variety of factors such as winter snowpack depth and current weather conditions. Weather, too, can change quickly in the mountains, with sunny conditions transforming into a thunderstorm in a matter of minutes. Knowing what’s in the forecast can be invaluable information for staying safe on the Trail.

Even then, predicting how much snow you might encounter on the Trail is often more art than science. As our Snow and Weather page notes:

“An active CT hiker (and CTF volunteer) who has monitored SNOTEL (Snow Telemetry) weather stations (maintained by the National Water and Climate Center) for years, has offered this advice: While SNOTEL weather station data is potentially helpful, the big problem is that virtually all of the SNOTEL sites show 0 inches of snowpack by the first week of June when there is still a lot of snow on The Colorado Trail at treeline and higher. (This is likely due to the elevation and aspect of most of the weather stations.) There are two particularly helpful SNOTEL sites, Fremont and Red Mountain, that have proven to hold snow longer and be more representative of the higher elevation areas on the CT. Fremont is centrally located for the CT north of U.S. Highway 50 (near the midpoint of the CT). Red Mountain is centrally located for the CT south of U.S. 50.”

We always advise Trail users to be flexible in planning their trips, especially if they’re trying to avoid snow that can make the Trail difficult to traverse, let alone find the path.

As for weather reports, our Snow and Weather section provides links to nine National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reporting sites along the Trail.

Another great resource is social media, including The Colorado Trail Foundation’s Facebook page and Twitter feed; the Colorado Trail Thru-Hike 2018 page on Facebook, with more than 2,000 members; and other hiker forums. CTF staff administer the organization’s official Facebook page, while the thru-hike page is an open forum, so pay close attention to the posting dates when gleaning weather and Trail condition information. (Have we mentioned that conditions can change quickly on the Trail?)

Many users will find a site created by 2016 thru-hiker Jim Lehmer of Saint Martins, Mo. very helpful, too. Log on to dullroar.com/ctwx.html and click on one of the more than 70 Colorado Trail icons along the Trail map shown and it will take you to the National Weather Service’s forecast for that latitude and longitude.

As Lehmer explains: “The ‘Current Conditions’ will be from the nearest weather observatory, but the ‘Extended Forecast’ will be for or near the actual point you clicked. If there is a snowflake icon, that indicates a SNOTEL station. Clicking on it will open both the weather tab and the SNOTEL report page for that site. If you hover over a CT icon on the map, it will give you the waypoint information. If you hover over a SNOTEL icon, it will tell you the SNOTEL station name.”

‘I hope people find it useful,” he wrote while introducing the site on the Colorado Trail Thru-Hike 2018 page in January. We already have.
NEW DATABOOK IS ON ITS WAY


The Databook, a pocket-size guidebook to The Colorado Trail, has long been considered one of the essentials by long-distance and segment hikers, bikers and riders. Even as the popularity of smartphone Trail maps grows, dump out any thru-hiker’s pack and you’re bound to find the latest edition of the CT Databook.

The past couple of editions have included vast improvements, and the 7th Edition Databook, now in production, is no exception. Perhaps most significantly, it will be the first printed on waterproof paper. Protective plastic bags no longer needed.

The new guide should be available anytime (now or very soon) at the CTF’s online store, Shop.ColoradoTrail.org, or at other retail outlets, well in advance of the Trail season. It’ll be well worth the wait. The new edition contains many additional water sources and other enhancements.

The new Databook features the most up-to-date Trail routing information, including the 80-mile Collegiate West route that was added to the Trail in 2012 and bicycle detours around wilderness areas. Resupply locations, camping spots, elevation profiles and significant waypoints are also included.

Keep an eye on ColoradoTrail.org, our Facebook page, and Twitter posts for information on a release date.

Already in our online store is a new 18-by-48-inch wall map of The Colorado Trail produced by National Geographic. As with all National Geographic maps, it is rich in detail, showing key locations along the Trail, points of interest, and a useful mileage chart. It is both a helpful tool for planning and as a commemorative to hang on your wall.

FOC Open For Business ... (continued from page 1)

Major donors to the project are the Benson Family Foundation, which supplemented its initial $40,000 donation in 2016 with another $15,000 at the end of last year; the Gates Family Foundation, $25,000; and the Jackson Family Fund, $10,000. More than 500 additional donors contributed.

Construction on the two buildings that make up the FOC began last year following a groundbreaking ceremony in May. The 1,600-square-foot main building features an office and storage and maintenance areas. A 1,900-square-foot storage building provides space for the CTF’s trail crew equipment and water tank trailers. Today, for the first time in the Trail’s more than 40-year history, we are able to store and maintain all of our equipment in one secure place protected from the elements.

Poncha Springs was chosen as the site for the FOC because of its location near the midway point of the Trail, making it an ideal spot to dispatch equipment to crews working all along the 567 miles of trail stretching between Denver and Durango.

In a surprise announcement at the December Holiday Party, it was revealed that the FOC would be named in honor of former CTF Board Chairman George Miller, whose involvement in the Trail goes back almost to the beginning, including 20 years as volunteer operations manager. Throughout those years, he stored and maintained much of the trail equipment now at the FOC at his property in Manitou Springs.

“No one has done more for the Trail than George Miller,” Staley said in making the announcement, “so it is entirely appropriate that we name the FOC after him.”

Miller has continued his service by helping Adams in getting the buildings ready for operation. That includes installing cabinets, shelving, and performing other finish work. A “trail crew” led by Miller in May will focus on landscaping the property.

Undoubtedly, one of the best ways to experience The Colorado Trail is on one of the wildly successful CTF-sponsored treks led by guides from Colorado Mountain Expeditions.

The 4-5-day hikes are fully supported, with guide staff transporting camping gear to the day’s destination, preparing refreshments and meals, and even providing showers. Many CT completers have accomplished their goal on treks over several seasons. Space is limited to 12 participants per week.

Because of the popularity of trekking program, participants are encouraged to sign up early. Already, most of 2018’s spots are filled, but wait lists are available.

For introductory info, go to ColoradoTrail.org
Hundreds of Colorado Trail supporters help the Foundation in myriad ways each year. Here are a few of the ways you can step up and lend us a hand.

**DONATE ONLINE:** You can donate online on the ColoradoTrail.org website. Simply click the “Donate Now” button on the left side of the home page to give via a credit card or PayPal. Better yet...

**MAKE A RECURRING GIFT:** You can do this by checking the box on the donation page to “Make This Recurring (Monthly).” Many donors find that giving $10, $15, $20, or more in a regular monthly withdrawal is a much more convenient way to give.

**COLORADO GIVES DAY:** A program of the Community First Foundation, Colorado Gives Day, held the first Tuesday in December each year, is aimed at increasing contributions to more than 1,600 nonprofit organizations in the state. Watch for CTF e-mails or check on Facebook for a reminder about this year’s event. For more information, go to ColoradoGives.org.

**AMAZONSMILE:** Through its AmazonSmile philanthropic program, Amazon contributes a half percent of eligible purchases to the buyer’s designated charity. It’s easy. Go to Smile.Amazon.com when buying

through Amazon and select The Colorado Trail Foundation as your designated charity.

**CT STORE:** Purchase any of the Trail-related items – maps, guidebooks, clothing, tools and commemoratives – from the CTF’s online store and the profits from the sale go to the Foundation. You can access the store through the ColoradoTrail.org home page.

**LEGACY GIVING:** Help ensure that the Trail will be here for future generations by including The Colorado Trail Foundation in your will or living trust. Your financial advisor, attorney or accountant can help you set up a charitable gift to the Foundation in the form of cash, stocks, bonds, or from proceeds of insurance policies or the sale of property. You can also designate the CTF as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA or pension plan.

**IRA REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS:** Donate all or a portion of your RMD directly to the CTF (a qualifying charity) and receive an EXCLUSION from taxable income without having to itemize deductions. Consult your tax professional about making a “Qualified Charitable Distribution.” The CTF can provide the transfer account info to you or your investment advisor.