Field Operations Center Nearing Completion

It's not much to look at – yet. Just a couple of concrete slabs and some red steel framework. But soon – perhaps as early as the end of November – the two buildings going up on an industrial lot in Poncha Springs will transform the way The Colorado Trail Foundation continues its work to maintain and improve The Colorado Trail.

The half-million-dollar Field Operations Center is the largest single project in the more than 40-year history of the Trail. It will provide the Foundation its first permanent home for equipment used by volunteer summer crews to work on the 567 miles of trail stretching from Denver to Durango through some of Colorado's most spectacular high country. The site is near the midpoint of the Trail.

The FOC will consist of two structures – a 1,600-square-foot office, maintenance and equipment storage facility, and a 1,900-square-foot trailer storage building – on a 50,000-square-foot lot at 122 Halleys Ave. in Poncha Springs (two blocks from the intersection of U.S. Highways 285 and 50).

“Construction is about 50 percent complete,” CTF Field Operations Manager Brent Adams, who will be headquartered at the new office/maintenance building, recently reported. “All of the foundation work is done, as well as water, sewer and gas lines to the main building, and work is continuing on the erection of both of the buildings.”

Barring any unforeseen issues, “we are looking at being able to move in by Thanksgiving,” he said.

A volunteer crew will be scheduled in the spring to complete work inside and outside of the buildings, including installing storage shelving, landscaping the property, and spreading gravel on the lot.

Groundbreaking for the facility was held on May 25 and construction work by Diesslin Structures Inc., an Arkansas Valley general contractor, began soon afterward.

Its completion will be the culmination of a two-year planning and fund-raising effort spearheaded by a committee led by CTF Board Member Steve Stadler and Board President Steve Staley. Major donors to the project include the Benson Family Foundation ($40,000), the Gates Family Foundation ($25,000), the Jackson Family Fund ($10,000) and others who wish to stay anonymous. Over 500 smaller donors also contributed. Another $122,000 came from the sale of a cabin near Lake City owned by the Foundation, with the rest coming from budget reserves.

“The completion of the FOC begins a new era for the CT Foundation,” according to Bill Manning, CTF Executive Director, “it will greatly enhance our ability to support and sustain the volunteers who build and maintain The Colorado Trail.”
Executive Director’s Update

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

This summer we asked our Facebook followers, “What Did You Learn on The Colorado Trail.” Here are a few of the wonderful answers, from the practical to the mystical, we received:

WAYNE JOHNSON: “After 70 miles on Segments 14-17 this summer, this asthmatic/COPD grandpa learned all over again to appreciate the soft life at home in Durango. Only 50 miles left to completion.”

ALAN BUCKINGHAM: “While thru-biking it in 22 days with my then 15-year-old son, I learned a ton: how amazing our state is, how far 500 miles really is, how deep a person can really dig both physically and mentally, and probably most important, how valuable the time we spend with our kids is.”

MO GOOD: “I know what time it is by the sun now, I can differentiate a marmot squeak from a pika, I know what a scary cloud is vs. just a gray cloud. Most importantly, I learned that what I need to live I can carry.”

DEBBIE ZEBARTH: “I learned that the beauty of the Trail can be ruined by the actions of a few. Fire destroyed a wonderful section around the Top Of The World area and will never be the same in my lifetime. When you have a campfire, make sure it is extinguished before leaving camp.”

LEA SHANON GREEN: “That going down hurts a lot more than going up. That blister prevention is paramount to success. That it’s possible to have ice form in your water bottle in July. That I’m tougher than I thought.”

BRETT POOLE: “Carry more water than you think you need.”

CHRISTOPHER CASE: “Just because the manufacturer of your bivvy says it’s waterproof, doesn’t mean it’s waterproof. Heavy rains for two days made my bivvy more like a child’s swimming pool, even after seem taping it.”

DEBORAH COUTTS GUESS: “Two lessons learned: Going fast is overrated, and I can live well with not much stuff.”

LAURIE DAFORNO: “I learned that rain pants are one of the best inventions! They keep you warm, dry and happy, even if it isn’t raining.”

AUSTIN KEMKER: “I learned that I’ll never take my sister, Olivia Paige Kemker, on the trail again because she likes to fall down the mountain and make me carry her two miles back to the car.” (To which Olivia replied with a Smiley Face and the comment: “I hate you.”).

TOM PARCHMAN: “It is about the journey.”

WooHoo!!

Bill Manning

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A DAY THAT STARTED OUT CLOUDY AND RAINY TURNED INTO A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE PARK – AND A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SEASON ON THE COLORADO TRAIL.

More than 225 people attended the annual CTF Friends Recognition Picnic at Bear Creek Lake Park in Lakewood on Sept. 16. CTF Executive Director Bill Manning and Board President Steve Stailey paid tribute to all of those who have volunteered or donated to the Foundation over the past year and recognized the Trail Completers and our partners from the Forest Service in attendance.

They also thanked Entertainment Committee Chairman Steve Stadler and committee members Carolyn Burtard, Sue Henley, Amy Nelson, Sandy Stailey, Diana Doyle and Diana Bristol for another great event.

Participants enjoyed sandwiches, cake, Colorado Native beer donated by AC Golden, and a raffle featuring Colorado Trail gear. The long-running pocket chainsaw competition drew a record number of participants.

Next up on the events calendar is the annual Colorado Trail Holiday Reception on Dec. 7 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden. Keep an eye or your inbox or mailbox for more information soon.

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Mark Your Calendar

Dec. 7
HOLIDAY RECEPTION
4:00-7:00 p.m.,
American Mountaineering Center, Golden.

Four-Time Finisher a Thankful Man

No one who completes The Colorado Trail walks alone, as David Fanning can attest. After finishing his fourth thru-hike in as many years this summer he posted on Facebook: “There are so many people to thank who make this trail so special to me, starting with (Executive Director) Bill Manning and The Colorado Trail Foundation, who do such a great job maintaining the trail and educating trail users about Leave No Trace ethics. The trail was in great shape this year and as clean as I’ve ever seen it. “I am especially grateful to my wife, Carol, who makes it possible for me to do this every year and to hikers and trail users too numerous to mention who share their stories, their dreams, and occasionally the most intimate moments of their lives with me. It is a privilege to share the trail with you. “Finally, I love the mountain folk who pick us up hitchhiking and show us innumerable kindnesses when we are in town. I love all of you! See you again next year (maybe!).” Fanning, of Fort Collins, has written a book, Voices of The Colorado Trail, available at our online store (shop.ColoradoTrail.org).
Sixteen volunteer trail crews cleared new trail and provided vital maintenance on other sections of The Colorado Trail this summer all while forming new friendships and basking in the beauty of the Colorado Rockies. It’s rewarding work that brings back dozens of volunteers year after year.

THE DETAILS:
The season began on June 1, the weekend of National Trails Day, with a four-day, 20-member CREW (0117) led by John and Elayna Lipe on a portion of heavily used – by both hikers and bikers – Segment 3, located in the Buffalo Creek Recreation Area. The maintenance work consisted mainly of improving drainage on the trail. A roadside culvert also was armored and drained, a half-mile abandoned trail was rehabbed and covered, and log check dams were built to trap sediment.

CREW 0217, led by former Operations Manager George Miller, bid goodbye to the Colorado Trail Foundation’s cabin near Lake City, which for several years was base camp for CTF educational programs. Conditions of the sale of the property in December 2016 was to move a storage shed on the property, which Miller’s crew accomplished between June 10 and June 17. Proceeds from the sale were dedicated to the construction of the Foundation’s new Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs.

On June 17, Field Operation Manager Brent Adams led a one-day CREW (0317) of 22, in performing maintenance on a section of the CT near Breckenridge. Some 50 drains were built, two downed trees removed, and a number of small lodgepole pines crowding the corridor trimmed or removed.

CREW 0417, a seven-day backpack crew led by Paul Smith, did extensive rehab work on tread in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness Area near the Mount Huron Trailhead from June 24-30. Work accomplished by the 13-person crew included building new drainage features, removing nearly a dozen trees, clearing a 300-350-foot willow-clogged corridor, extending a turnpike by 25 feet, and building 80-100 feet of new tread to reroute the trail from an area that was poorly drained.

Scott Smith and Laura Brieser-Smith led an eight-day CREW (0517) from June 24-July 1 in building new trail above the old railroad grade near the ghost town of Hancock in Segment CW05 to move the trail off of a four-wheel-drive road. Some 800 feet of new tread was completed by the 25-member crew. It required building a 15-by-4-foot rock wall, several drainages, creating a 6-foot stream ford crossing, and an 80-foot crushed rock causeway through a marshy area.

The annual women-only CREW (0617) led by Cindy Johnson from June 30-July 2 performed repair work on turnpikes on a section of the Collegiate West near Winfield. The 24 women cut 12 channels into existing turnpikes as well as installing two french drains. In addition, one turnpike was extended 30 feet.
Glenn Kepler directed a 27-person CREW (0717) from July 8-15 in building a 60-foot turnpike near Jefferson Lake Road west of Kenosha Pass. Construction required mucking out about 12-16 inches of mud about six feet wide for the entire length of the turnpike before proceeding to build the raised section of trail. Three eight-inch diameter plastic pipes were laid in the foundation rock to channel water under and through the turnpike. Secondary work included cleaning water bars from the turnpike to the intersection with the West Jefferson Creek Trail and removing 20 downed trees.

Twenty-eight volunteers joined leader Brent Adams on a one-day CREW (0817) on July 8 to build and rehab drainage structures on a three-mile section of trail east of Kenosh Pass. Work consisted of constructing 45 drainage structures and removing loose rock from the tread on entrenched portions of the trail.

Loren Woods led a 10-person backpack CREW (0917) from July 15-19 in building and maintaining drainage features in the La Garita Wilderness near San Luis Pass. They also cleared willows from hundreds of feet of trail and improved a stream crossing.

The 17-person CREW 1017, led by Bill Carpenter, continued building new trail near Hancock from July 22-29, following in the footsteps of Crew 0517 earlier in the season. Some 1,150 feet of new tread was completed. In addition, tread in two boggy areas was improved, two creek bed crossings were armored, and multiple drains installed.

Brent Adams led another one-day CREW (1117) on July 22 in removing rotted log decking and curving, peeling, and installing new log decking on the Wurts Ditch bridge south of Tennessee Pass. The 20-person crew also removed rotting retaining logs on approaches to a nearby bridge and rebuilt the approaches with rock retaining walls, small rock, and mineral soil.

A four-day CREW (1217) led by Cindy Johnson from July 27-30 rebuilt and extended an existing turnpike and constructed and maintained drains in the Holy Cross Wilderness.

CREW 1317, led by Brent Adams on Aug. 13, built 30 feet of new tread up a steep bank on the south side of a bridge near the Silver Creek Trailhead to complete a realignment roughed in by the Adopter and volunteers in 2016. The 17-person crew also assisted the Forest Service in cleaning log and willow debris and other obstructions around the bridge and cleaned or rebuilt more than two dozen drains.

Doug Buttery led a backpack CREW (1417) from Aug. 17-20 re-benching 1,700 feet of trail, replacing a rotting log bridge over Nutras Creek with stepping stones, and arming a 30-foot section of muddy trail.

Dave Landers led another backpack CREW (1517) from Aug. 19-25 in building about 175 feet of new trail in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness to move the trail off of the motorized Timberline Trail near the Illinois Creek road. The work included building three or four rock steps and two short monowalls.

The final crew of the summer (1617), under the leadership of Connie Wian, worked from Sept. 2-8 moving rocks to stabilize a bank of Elk Creek to protect the trail from erosion. Additional work consisted of continuing to dismantle the logjam that is forcing Elk Creek into the eroding bank. The crew finished with re-benching and drainage work.
‘CANDY STORE’ FOR CT FANS

Got a hole in your favorite Colorado Trail T-shirt? We’ve got a solution for that.
That beat-up copy of the CT Guidebook of yours that’s missing the Collegiate West route? We’ve got a solution for that, too.
Stumped over what to give your favorite outdoors person during the holidays?
We’ve got you covered.

The Colorado Trail Foundation’s online store — (shop.ColoradoTrail.org) features all things Colorado Trail-related from apparel to maps to books and memorabilia. An added bonus: Every purchase you make supports CTF programs and activities.

If you haven’t visited the online store site recently, here are a few of the new offerings you’ll find:
— Three new topographic map guides to the CT North, CT South and the Collegiate Loop, produced in collaboration with National Geographic and Trails Illustrated. The beautifully illustrated 4.25-by-9.375-inch booklets are waterproof and tear-resistant. They include elevation profiles, resupply information, bicycle detours, and grids to aid with GPS navigation. ($14.95 each; $41.85 for all three)
— Even experienced backpackers will benefit from the information in Liz “Snorkel” Thomas’ book, Long Trails: Mastering the Art of the Thru-Hike, published by Backpacker magazine. Thomas, former women’s speed record holder for the Appalachian Trail and veteran of 20 long trails, offers advice on selecting gear, budget and schedule planning, and resupplying on the trail. ($24.95)
— Recently introduced shirts include the Mountain Flowers Top, a women’s-cut T-shirt or tank inspired by the mountains and Mother Nature ($21.95), and the Gudy Gaskill Commemorative T-shirt ($18.95), in both men’s and women’s styles, which honors the “Mother of The Colorado Trail,” who wore this shirt as she led the very first, celebratory CT thru-hike in 1988.
— Take the CT with you by wearing the new Trail Marker Cap, a black ballcap-style hat featuring a Colorado Trail marker replica. ($22.95)
— Want a reminder of your time on the Trail? The store features several commemoratives, including the colorful Colorado Trail Medal ($25) and the 18-by-24-inch Colorado Trail Poster Map, developed by USGS cartographers using precise Colorado Trail line data against a wonderfully detailed Rocky Mountain landscape ($10).
— Every CT traveler has a story and four-time completer David W. Fanning has collected a number of them in Voices of the Colorado Trail, a 124-page softcover book that captures both the personalities of Trail users and the scenery of the CT. ($24.95)
It’s no surprise to us, but The Colorado Trail has made *Outside* magazine’s list of “The Best Short(er) Thru-Hikes in America.”

In its description of the CT, *Outside* says: “Starting in Denver and ending in Durango, most of The Colorado Trail is at, above, or very close to the treeline, topping out at 13,271 feet in the San Juan Mountains. The route takes you through six wilderness areas and six national forests, and you can expect plenty of expansive ‘go on forever’ views. You should be geared up for quick and drastic weather changes, mostly in the form of afternoon thunderstorms that roll in consistently during summer. Plan to start early in the day and end early to minimize the chance of getting caught in a storm above treeline.”

Fans of the CT undoubtedly will be tantalized by the other trails on the list:

— The 272-mile Long Trail in Vermont, which takes users over Vermont’s highest peaks in the Green Mountains as it traverses the entire state from the Massachusetts state line to the Canadian border;

— The 296-mile Superior Hiking Trail in Minnesota, which begins in Duluth and continues on to the Canadian border, following the ridgeline of Lake Superior;

— The 425-mile Oregon Coast Trail, which follows entire coastline of Oregon, from the Columbia River in the north down to the California border;

— The 223-mile Ouachita National Recreation Trail, which passes through the scenic Ouachita Mountains, the tallest range between the Rockies and Appalachians, in Oklahoma and Arkansas;

— And the 557-mile Finger Lakes Trail in upstate New York, which runs from Allegany State Park, on the border of Pennsylvania and New York, east into the Catskills Forest Preserve.

Social media has greatly expanded the reach and popularity of The Colorado Trail and one of the most popular gathering places for those hoping to go the distance are Facebook’s Colorado Trail Thru-Hike pages.

Beginning in 2015, the pages have drawn increasing attention from those looking for advice on everything from gear to resupply, trail conditions, and restaurant and layover recommendations. (Although we continue to urge Trail users to consult the CTF’s own Facebook Page (The Colorado Trail Foundation), our web page (ColoradoTrail.org), and our official publications for the most complete and accurate information, our office does what it can to assist users on both official and unofficial CT sites.)

Starting modestly, the Colorado Trail Thru-Hike 2015 page totaled about 870 members. The 2016 page grew to more than 1,900 members and this year’s page totaled nearly 6,200 members. Already, more than 400 people have joined the Colorado Trail Thru-Hike 2018 page. (By comparison, The Colorado Trail Foundation page has 16,300 followers.)

Recent items on the 2017 page have included discussions about backpack stoves and cameras, a plethora of photos from the Trail, and a post by Steve Castellano of Cincinnati, who recounted a couple of “magical moments” he experienced on the Trail and asked others to share theirs.

He wrote:

“Flashback 2016: I hitch off the Elbert trailhead directly to the Golden Burro in Leadville, breakfast on my mind. While crushing the biggest breakfast they serve … I start talking to other breakfasters in the next booth -- a kid, hiking the trail too, and his folks. We chat, eat, talk about hiking. They leave; we say goodbye. After they’re gone, the waitress informs me the father had picked up my tab. A trail angel … and it completely made my day as I was feeling rough.

“2017: I’m hiking the Trail for the second time; I’m in (Segment) 3, or somewhere close. I approach a trail crossing, with mountain bikers crossing in general confusion, and a man, a hiker, looking hard in my direction. I say hello, pass, and he says, ‘Hey, aren’t you a professor at Western Kentucky University?’ I say, ‘No, I’m a professor at Northern Kentucky University.’ He says, ‘I met you last year at the Golden Burro in Leadville; my son was hiking the Trail.’ So here I was, standing in front of my trail angel from the previous year, hiking the Trail himself, and I could finally thank him for my breakfast. … His desire to hike this trail, and his ongoing determination and positive attitude inspired me. He is my CT hero of 2017. Thanks for everything Michael Burkett. I hope to hike with you again.

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“This trail is full of magic … ”

We couldn’t agree more.
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 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 the date of 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, simply 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 goes 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.

**THANK YOU!**

Step Up and *Lend a Hand*