FIRST SEASON SUCCESS FOR FOC

A RESOUNDING SUCCESS! That’s how The Colorado Trail Foundation staff and volunteers describe the new George Miller Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs at the end of its first trail crew season.

The FOC, completed this spring and dedicated on June 2 (see photos of the celebration inside), is now the focal point for all Trail maintenance operations under the direction of CTF Field Operations Manager Brent Adams.

The facility’s namesake, George Miller, who was the CTF’s volunteer operations manager for two decades and has been a volunteer for nearly three, was instrumental in getting the FOC up and running, including leading a crew in May that put the finishing touches on the buildings and grounds in advance of the dedication.

“We are making good progress getting the facility organized so that everything has a place and can easily be accessed,” he noted recently about this “breaking-in” season.

“The FOC has been a great addition to our operations program on several fronts,” Miller added. “For trail crew support, it has made Brent’s work much easier and efficient, with shorter travel times in taking trailers to the crews. Also in making it easier to clean and restock between crews.”

Adams agrees whole-heartedly. “The FOC has made it much easier to inventory and maintain crew equipment,” he said. In prior years, equipment and trailers were scattered at various locations around the state making that job much more difficult and time-consuming.

“In the new facility I was able to clean all of the cook stoves, test the burners, test all propane hoses and fittings for leaks, and repair those that were leaking. All of these things increase the efficiency and safety of our operations,”

he noted as an example.

Also, “The FOC allowed me to unpack, clean and organize our crew trailers indoors over a period of days instead of in a single day outside like we did before, resulting in much more thorough attention to the equipment we are providing our volunteers. Having water service and a concrete slab allowed us to clean crew canopies and floors, which likely had never been done before.”

There are other benefits as well.

“The central location of the FOC gives Brent better access to several U.S. Forest Service offices for better communication with their personnel,” Miller said. “And with the crew season over, we can get the trailers ready for next year, regardless of the weather, in comfortable conditions.”

In addition, Miller said, the FOC has benefited the CTF’s trekking program by enabling Chris and Jeanne Szczecin of Colorado Mountain Expeditions, who run the fully supported treks, to store supplies, food and vehicles at a central location near the Trail, saving both time and money.

The half-million dollar operations center is the largest single project ever undertaken by The Colorado Trail Foundation. Its dedication came 30 years after the late Judy Gaskill, “Mother of The Colorado Trail,” led dedication ceremonies in Denver and Durango to commemorate completion of the Trail itself a year earlier.

The facility consists of a 1,600-square-foot main building that includes an office and storage and maintenance areas, and a 1,900-square-foot storage building that can house all of the CTF’s trail crew equipment and water tank trailers protected from the elements.
Executive Director's Update

But 15 years is a long time in the web world and it’s time to update. Toward that end, earlier this year we assembled a website team of professionals, staff and volunteers, even as we were finishing the FOC. Goals were established, including making the site more smartphone and tablet friendly. We want the site to be easily navigable, highly searchable, inviting, clean and readable. And, in keeping with everything we do at the Foundation, we’re trying to do it in the most cost-effective way possible.

We’ve made good progress. We’ve chosen a website platform and are narrowing the framework, theme, forms and eCommerce choices to deliver both the look and ease of use that will serve us and our users well. But there is still a lot to do. Pages are being rewritten and photos found. Functionality is being expanded, including online registration for trail crews and a new blog that will greatly improve our ability to relay information about current Trail conditions.

The “go-live” date is not yet set, but the excitement is building for our “new-look” website. Thanks to all who have donated their time and money to the Foundation; it is that support that enables us to do the work we do on behalf of the Trail.

WooHoo!

Bill Manning
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THANK YOU, CTF

We love to hear from grateful Trail users. Here are a few recent comments:

“Thanks again for all you do. The CT is one of the most beautiful (and well-maintained) trails I have hiked on. That is because of (CTF staff and volunteers) who put so much into making the experience the best.” — WALLY WINTINGER, COLORADO SPRINGS

“Thank you and all of the CTF volunteers for what you do! My thru-hike in 2016 was one of the best things in my life — “life affirming if not life changing” is how I typically put it. Made a couple of great friends, one of whom will be hiking some sections with me again this summer when I do the NOBO trek. Without the CTF, the Trail wouldn’t exist, and for that, I am happy to contribute. One of these years I plan on volunteering for some trail work, too.” — JIM LEHMER, JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

“I called earlier this morning to get updates on the wildfires and water sources. I got disconnected before I had a chance to say thank you so much for your help and for doing the work that you do. You make it possible for so many of us to enjoy the Trail, and I greatly appreciate your support and advice.” — NATALIE “ZINGER” BUDINGTON, PALO ALTO, CA.
Fires Close CT for Part of Season

It was touch and go for Colorado Trail users this summer after fires shut down part of the CT near Durango for more than a month.

Two major fires, designated the 416 and Burro Fires, broke out in early June, forcing the closure of Segments 25-28 (Molas Pass to Junction Creek Trailhead) from June 9 until July 12. For part of that time the entire San Juan National Forest, covering nearly 1.9 million acres (more than 2,900 square miles), was closed for the first time ever. By the time the fires were contained in late July nearly 60,000 acres had burned, making it one of the largest wildfires in Colorado history.

After the closures were announced, Colorado Trail Foundation staff leapt into action, fielding dozens of calls and posting updates on the CTF website and other social media sites to keep Trail users apprised of the latest information. Still, many hikers, bikers and riders planning extended trips on the Trail began their journeys not knowing whether the final segments of the Trail would be open by the time they reached them.

Fortunately, because most thru-hikers travel southbound from Denver and begin their treks after July 1, few were affected by the closure. Those who had to reroute were supplied alternatives, including ending their trip in Silverton rather than Durango.

“When authorities reopened The Colorado Trail on July 12, you could almost hear the collective cheer through the Internet,” said CTF Executive Director Bill Manning. “Many travelers were able to go back to their original plan and continue hiking, or biking, all the way to Durango.”

Fire closures are not uncommon on the Trail, occurring every few years, but the length of this year’s was unusual. That could change, according to long-range fire forecasters, as drought conditions and rising temperatures, including in southwestern Colorado, continue.

That makes it all the more important for Colorado Trail users to be aware of fire restrictions in the areas they plan to visit and be safe. Here are some tips from the National Park Service:

- If you use a campfire, make sure it is fully extinguished before leaving the area; be sure it is cold to the touch.
- If you are using a portable stove, make sure the area is clear of grasses and other fine fuels. Prevent stoves from tipping and starting a fire.
- Consider alternatives to campfires during periods of high fire danger.
- Practice Leave No Trace principles: pack out cigarette butts and burned materials from your camping area.
- If you see smoke or fire note the location as best you can and report it to authorities. Do not attempt to put out a fire by yourself.

(See the accompanying article on stove restrictions in Colorado)

Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 13 DURANGO GATHERING, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Carver Brewing Co., 1022 Main Ave., Durango.
Dec. 6 HOLIDAY RECEPTION, 4:00-7:00 p.m., American Mountaineering Center, Golden.

STOVE RESTRICTIONS ON THE TRAIL

If you are debating what type of stove to carry on The Colorado Trail, the decision might already have been made for you by public lands managers. Because of fire restrictions frequently issued during the hiking season in Colorado, it’s likely that a pressurized canister stove may be your only legal option.

THERE ARE TWO LEVELS OF RESTRICTIONS:

- **STAGE 1** bans, which are instituted nearly every summer on parts or all of The Colorado Trail, prohibit backcountry campfires and the alcohol and twig stoves popular with ultralight backpackers.
- **STAGE 2** bans, which are even more restrictive and affected the entire CT in 2018, prohibit all types of backpacker stoves except for pressurized canister stoves. That means no alcohol, esbit solid fuel, white gas, or other liquid fuel stoves.

The restrictions stem in part from past incidents in Colorado. The 2012 Hewlett Gulch Fire in Poudre Canyon west of Fort Collins, for instance, was started by a camper whose alcohol stove tipped over and started the grass on fire. He tried to stomp it out, then took off when his efforts were unsuccessful.

Because fire safety is so important in Colorado’s drought-prone mountains, and because fire bans are difficult to predict, The Colorado Trail Foundation recommends that all multiday Trail users carry a pressurized canister stove. They work well, are fuel efficient, and weigh only slightly more than other types of stoves.
21 Crews Take to

Here are the highlights:

CREW 0118 — BOSWELL CREEK, COLLEGIATE W., SEG. 01
May 31-June 3. Bob Mathes, crew leader, and 12 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built a new bridge over Boswell Creek.

CREW 0218 — WEST BEAR CREEK, SEG. 1
June 7-10. Greg Speights, crew leader, and seven crew members. Major work accomplished: Built 24 new drains and removed loose rocks from trail tread.

CREW 0318 — BLANKS CABIN, SEG. 14
June 9-16. John and Elyna Lipe, crew leaders, and 24 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built two turnpikes and one armored crossing, replaced two sign posts, and cleared multiple water diversions.

CREW 0418 — GOLD HILL, SEG. 7
June 23. Brent Adams and Anne Engelt, crew leaders, and 28 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built 33 new drains and seven check dams and cleaned 24 drains.

CREW 0518 — SHEEP GULCH, COLLEGIATE W., SEG. 01
June 23-25. Cindy Johnson, crew leader, and 24 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built 28 water bars, installed four check steps, put in a retaining wall, removed a tree across the trail, and took out hundreds of aspen saplings.

CREW 0618 — SOUTH COTTONWOOD CREEK, SEG. 13
June 28-July 1. Diana Bristol, crew leader, and 23 crew members. Major work accomplished: Constructed a 400-foot realignment and drains to improve entrenched area of the Trail.

CREW 0718 — MITCHELL CREEK SEG. 8
June 30. Brent Adams and Anne Engelt, crew leaders, and 17 crew members. Major work accomplished: 41 drains cleaned or constructed and corridor cleared of willows and tree branches.

CREW 0818 — SAN LUIS PASS, SEG. 20-21

CREW 0918 — HANCOCK, COLLEGIATE W., SEG. 01
July 7-July 14. Scott Smith and Laura Brieser-Smith, crew leaders, and 22 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built 1,100 feet of new trail, two 150-foot mono walls and a set of rock steps, and cleared eight downed trees across the Trail.

CREW 1018 — LUJAN PASS, SEG. 17
July 14-21. Dave Fitzwater, crew leader, and eight crew members. Major work accomplished: Installed 107 drains, raked one mile of tread, constructed 300 yards of new tread, and armored 100 yards of trail.

CREW 1118 — ILLINOIS CREEK, COLLEGIATE W., SEG. 02
July 21-25. Doug Buttery, crew leader, and 12 crew members. Major work accomplished: Constructed 200 feet of tread and laid up 85 feet of wall below the Trail and 40 feet of wall above the Trail.

CREW 1218 — AVALANCHE GULCH, SEG. 13

CREW 1318 — KENOSHA PASS, SEG. 5
July 28. Brent Adams and Anne Engelt, crew leaders, and 25 crew members. Major work accomplished: Constructed and cleaned approximately 70 drains.

CREW 1418 — ILLINOIS CREEK, COLLEGIATE W., SEG. 03

CREW 1518 — PORCUPINE GULCH, SEG. 9
July 29-Aug 2. Glenn Kepler, crew leader, and 15 crew members. Major work accomplished: 1,065 feet of tread upgraded, 20 check steps improved, and 15 drains reworked and improved.

CREW 1618 — MINERS CREEK, SEG. 7
Aug. 4-8. Bill Carpenter, crew leader, and 13 crew members. Major work accomplished: Built two stringer bridges on sills and installed or repaired 35 drains.

CREW 1718 — CATARACT CREEK, SEG. 8
Aug. 4-10. Paul Smith, crew leader, and four crew members. Major work accomplished: Improved drainage on eroding section of CTC/CDT.

CREW 1818 — STRAIGHT CREEK, SEG. 26
Aug. 11-17. Phil Ayers, crew leader, and 11 crew members. Major work accomplished: Completed 741 feet of new tread, armored four water crossings, widened 100 feet of entrenched trail and improved and cleaned 12 drains.
NEW HARD HATS GO GREEN

If you worked on a trail crew this summer or encountered one while on the Trail, you undoubtedly noticed the new apparel worn by crew members: forest green hard hats emblazoned with The Colorado Trail logo. They replaced the hodge-podge of old white hard hats that crews had been using for years.

Credit the CTF Operations Committee members (Brent Adams, John Lipe and Steve Stadler) for getting them designed, ordered and into the field in time for the trail season.

The response, they say, has been enthusiastic. “It’s something we’ve been talking about for a long time,” Stadler said, and they were happy to be able to introduce the distinctive hats during the inaugural season of the new George Miller Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs.

IT WAS A BIG TRAIL BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE YEAR ON THE COLORADO TRAIL, with 21 crews working up and down the Trail from West Bear Creek in the north to Straight Creek near Rico in the south.
YOU’D BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANYONE who knows the Colorado Trail better than Jerry Brown. After all, he literally made the maps that most CT users tuck in their pockets and backpacks—or access on their smartphone apps—before taking to the Trail. Oh, and he’s traversed the length of Trail a record (as best we can tell) seven times, including the very first thru-hike in 1990—at a time when only a few folks, like Brown, thought such a thing was even possible—and finishing No. 7, this time on foot, in August.

Brown, owner of the Durango-based Bear Creek Survey Services and a Colorado Trail Foundation board member since 2001, completed his first full-scale mapping expedition in 2000, collecting thousands of GPS waypoints that greatly increased the accuracy of maps of the Trail. He further improved the data on his second mapping thru-hike in 2005, accompanied by his dog, Zappa. His CT Map Books and those he has supplied for several editions Official Guidebook and Databook are the standard for all maps of the Trail today.

On his latest thru, along with collecting even more GPS data, he took about 1,500 photos for the Guthook smartphone app (Colorado Trail Guide, available for both iPhone and Android phones via AtlasGuides.com/colorado-trail), a clear reflection of the transition among hikers, riders and backpackers to access Trail information electronically instead of using traditional maps and guidebooks.

He’s seen a lot of other changes on the Trail over the years. “This year’s hike was a lot different than previous hikes,” he said. “It has become much more of a social event due to the higher numbers of hikers.”

For comparison, he offered a list of his previous thurs and the number of reported Trail completers for those years:

- 1990 (4 completers)
- 1996 (27)
- 2000 (39)
- 2003 (73)
- 2005 (62)
- 2007 (59) (While hiking from Durango from Denver he put up 600 confidence markers for northbound hikers.)
- 2018 (estimated 340-plus)

Undoubtedly, Brown and his maps have a lot to do with the increasing popularity of the Trail. Over the years since his first thru-hike “the Trail has become well-established and relatively easier to navigate,” he noted.

For that, The Colorado Trail Foundation and all those who enjoy The Colorado Trail owe him a big debt of gratitude.
**COMPLETERS CELEBRATE A WALK WELL DONE**

**THE GADGET GIRL.** It’s easy to see why Betty Cook of Omaha picked up “Gadget” as her Trail name. Perhaps most notable among her “gadgets” was an umbrella attached to her pack with cords and carabiners to keep it from inverting in the wind. “I feel dorky,” she said in a Facebook post, but added “it worked well.” Clever lady. As for completing her hike in August, she posted, “Wow. Just wow. As the end drew near I found myself thinking more of the incredible people I met along the way and then I thought of the spectacular scenery and the parts that scared the crap out of me. I could not have done this without the help of so many people . . . (and) I met so many incredible hikers who made my trip so enjoyable. How many days? Well I did Segments 1 and 2 in May and started at 3 on June 23. How many zero days? A lot! I enjoyed checking out the towns and meeting the locals . . . Now to eat real food and make my way back to Nebraska.”

**HEART AND HOME.** “I left my heart on this Trail,” Grace Waresback of Dallas posted on Facebook. “Every time I think about it, I light up. The time spent on this journey is the happiest time of my life. I miss the smells, the people, the beauty of it all. The call of the wild calls me home. The CT is home.”

**BANG FOR YOUR BUCK.** Kacie Taylor of Maine, who thru-hiked the Trail with her new husband, Zachary Jordan, announced on Facebook on July 27 that “Big Spoon and Moxie made it to Durango yesterday around 2 p.m. Colorado is a beautiful state that I am so lucky to have had the chance to experience by foot. Out of the three thru-hikes I’ve done, this one is the most bang for your buck. Thank you to all who provided advice, a ride, or a place to stay.”

**BEST EXPERIENCE.** “Finished the trail today!” Vickie Ellis Keller of Arvada posted on Aug. 10. “What an adventure! Best experience I’ve ever had! Thank you to The Colorado Trail Foundation for everything you do to allow me to have this. Thank you for the volunteer workers who make this trail what it is. I will give back when I can.”

**THANKFUL FOR SO MUCH.** “There is so much to say about this journey that I won’t even try to capture in this post, but foremost I am thankful,” said Terry Lyons of Castle Rock, who finished his thru-hike on Aug. 4. “Thankful to all those who work diligently each year keeping this grand trail open. Thankful to my employer for giving me such a long break to make this happen. Thankful to those who supported us on this adventure, providing encouragement, getting us hotel rooms for resupply days, helping us get things such as new shoes when required. Thankful that my body healed up after my fall, allowing me to complete this to the end. Thankful for the firefighters who put out the fires that allowed the Trail to open up to the very end. Thankful for the wonderful Trail Angels providing such kindness and support. Thankful for the Trail itself and the beautiful Rocky Mountains that are right here in my backyard. But most of all, thankful to my son, Shane (Lyons), and nephew, Ryan (Hewitt), for deciding to take this on again and sticking through to the end.”

**EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS.** “I made it!” exulted Stefano Carniglia of Boulder in a Facebook posting on Aug. 22. “What an amazing experience!! Views that went on forever, new friendships created, drinking pristine alpine water, listening to the pure silence of nature and then also at her mercy as you walk across the state! 485 miles long and the vertical equivalent of three Mount Everests, almost 90,000 vertical feet! Thank you Colorado Trail, you were everything and more than I expected.”

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**Short legs, big heart**

You see hikers of all shapes and sizes on the CT, but few cuter than Sid the dog. CTF Field Operations Manager Brent Adams encountered Sid and his human, Connor, in August while they were heading toward Lake Ann Pass in Segment 02 of the Collegiate West. Short in stature (and weighing in at only 16 pounds), but big of heart, Sid reportedly has covered 25-26 miles on a big day and summited La Plata Peak, a Fourteener. Connor fitted Sid out in his own rain jacket “to minimize the wet dog smell in the tent.”
Step Up and *Lend a Hand*

_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. 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.

**THANK YOU!**