

Friends of the Sandia Mountains Annual Newsletter, September 2015



**Friends of the Sandia Mountains
P.O. Box 1832,
Tijeras, New Mexico 87059**

From the President

As has been my practice each year as I prepare this column, I attempt to describe my impressions of the prior year in a phrase or even a word or two. Looking back over the past number of years the words dry, brown or closure appeared with disturbing frequency. However, in looking back over the past year, none of those words seem to be applicable in any manner whatsoever. The two words that keep coming up each time I look back this time are green and lush, and it is not just green and lush that apply, but GREEN and LUSH!

Those of us who have witnessed the conditions on our mountain over the past many years have seen the effects of too little precipitation in the stress to the vegetation in general and the continuing loss of so many of the trees. This year, at last, we had a reprieve. It is indeed a beautiful time in the Sandias. Visitors have been presented with

October Monthly Meeting

**7:00 pm at Sandia Ranger Station
Tuesday, October 6**

**Dr. Gary Morgan
Sandia Cave Research**

**November and December
No Meeting**

bountiful displays of flowers. The aspens have shed their stressed, faded look in exchange for vibrant green. Volunteers doing trail maintenance often had to cut their way through the overgrowth in ways reminiscent of those old jungle movies from the 1950s. All those forest closure signs spent their summer gathering dust on shelves in the SRD shop.

If you haven't had a chance to get out on the mountain yet this year, by all means do so soon. You will find it a refreshing and uplifting experience.

Please take time to read the activity reports which follow that document the varied projects and activities undertaken by our FOSM volunteers over the past year.

My sincere thanks go to all our dedicated volunteers for their hard work and for all they do on behalf of our organization. Thanks also to the FOSM Officers and Board for their guidance and direction and

to the staff of the United States Forest Service Sandia Ranger District whose Support and encouragement are vital to our mission.

See you on the mountain.

Bob Lowder, President
Friends of the Sandia Mountains

Talking Talons Collaborative Forest Restoration Program

The task of the Friends of the Sandia Mountains in the Talking Talons Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) over a period of four years was to clear the pinon-juniper forest to restore meadow conditions on 14 acres of a 30-acre parcel at the northwest corner of the Sandia Ranger District (SRD) south of I-40. During the first three years of the project, FOSM volunteers felled and limbed trees in the meadow areas. They bucked the trunks into stove/fireplace lengths and piled it so that it was available for collection by Boy Scouts who distributed it to needy families.

During FY2015 FOSM volunteers continued to buck tree trunks felled earlier.

On November 12, fourteen volunteers braved blustery, cold winds to buck twenty-two piles of fuel wood at the FOSM FY2013A site near the Leisure Mountain Mobile Home Park south of NM 333. These were in addition to the ten piles bucked the previous week. The bucked wood was collected and distributed to needy families by Boy Scouts on November 22. 136 hours of volunteer time were reported to the Talking Talons Youth Leadership organization for the work done on these two days. (Dan Benton and Sam Beard)



A beautiful octagonal picnic table tucked into the rocks and trees in La Cueva PA is now visible, clean and ready for use.

Photo by Sally Lowder

Fall Maintenance at Capulin Snowplay Area

In addition to being part of the usual preparation for safe use of the snowplay area, this project was part of a community initiative for improved winter recreation on Sandia Mountain, More Kids in the Winter Woods (MKWW), being managed by Talking Talons Youth Leadership and funded by a USFS grant.

At the request of Bob Heiar, SRD Recreation Staff Officer, volunteers on Wed., Oct. 15, felled danger trees and cut brush at the Capulin Snowplay Area. The following number of danger trees were

felled in each part of the snowplay area: old tubing area - 13 trees; shelter and fire ring - 4 trees; new tubing area - 6 trees; road from picnic area to snowplay area - 6 trees; and island in parking lot - 2 trees; a total of 31 trees. The maximum diameter of these trees was 25 inches. Locust brush and small trees in the island were cut so that snow plow operators would be able to push snow into the island from the parking lot.

On October 22, volunteers felled 15 danger trees with the maximum diameter being 12 inches along the road and around the parking lot. Other completed tasks were (1) cleaning the shelter, (2) splitting wood for the fire pit, (3) cutting brush, and (4) chipping slash. (Sam Beard)

New Ski Trails – Part of MKWW Project

As part of the More Kids in the Winter Woods Project, on November 21 volunteers removed several dozen down trees (max. dia. of about 18 in.), brush, and a few small standing trees from a new cross country ski trail flagged by Kerry Wood, SRD Trails and Wilderness Program Manager, high on Sandia Mountain in 2 inches of snow. The new 0.7 km (0.4 mile) trail is located up the mountainside from the 10K South Trailhead parking area and is adjacent to a 1.3 km (0.8 mile) loop that Fredrik Landstedt, UNM cross country ski team coach, groomed last year. The trail width was about 8 feet, and the swamper moved the pieces to the low side of the trail to hold snow in order to reduce the side slope for easier grooming with a snowmobile and track setter.

On December 3, volunteers high pruned this new trail and filled a dip in the route with logs. At the request of Kerry Wood, they also bucked numerous large logs and pruned branches to clear a short ski trail reroute at the north end of the UNM loop to provide a

less steep alternate route adjacent a steeper section of trail.

On Monday, December 8, four Ski Club members, Dennis Crowther, Carl Smith, Eric Russell, and Sam Beard cleared a 0.3-mile narrow ski trail that lies parallel to the Crest Highway at the first switchback above the 10K Trailheads. It lies just north of a 0.4-mile wider trail planned by Kerry Wood.

Eric Russell and Sam Beard explored and mapped several potential ski/hike routes along old roads between 10KN Trailhead and Capulin Snowplay Area. (Sam Beard, Eric Russell, and Steve Roholt)

Restoration of La Cueva and Juan Tabo Picnic Areas

The USFS is working on plans for restoration of the historic CCC/WPA facilities in La Cueva and Juan Tabo Picnic Areas. Volunteer Joelle Hertel, a retired engineer, has done considerable planning using a 1958 map of the La Cueva PA.

On three outings during FY2015 FOSM volunteers did significant initial work toward the restoration of these picnic areas. On November 19 volunteers pruned trees and shrubbery around the 23 remaining picnic tables and rock shelter in the **Juan Tabo Picnic Area**. Several picnic tables had become completely unusable or inaccessible due to vegetation growth. Encroaching vegetation was cut back three feet from the tables and benches by using loppers, pruning saws, and chain saws. Where needed, the trails leading to the picnic tables were also pruned. In addition, the volunteers picked up and bagged enough trash to fill the bed of a USFS pickup.

After completion of the work, several volunteers investigated the dam and cistern

constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the canyon northeast of the present La Luz trail head to provide a water system for the picnic area. The water system and road were constructed by the CCC Company 814 based in Sandia Park between November 1933 and May 1934.

Construction of the picnic area was completed by the Transient Services overseen by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) some time between 1935 and 1936. Today there are 23 tables remaining of the 28 that were once there.

On December 10, volunteers continued the planned pruning around picnic tables and along trails in **La Cueva Picnic Area**. Specifically, the volunteers removed branches above about two dozen tables with manual and power pole saws, cut brush back at least 36 inches from tables and benches, pruned along trails and around the restroom, and removed branches that were encroaching on historic granite and mortar restrooms. Leaves and dirt were removed from three sets of stone steps. One of the most important tasks was dragging and carrying slash (cut branches) to the three parking lots where it was chipped. Removing the slash not only makes the picnic area more attractive, it also reduces the wild fire danger.

On January 7 volunteers finished the limbing, brushing and chipping in both picnic areas. Most of the trees that had been trimmed were oak. The branches were twisted, and many required additional cutting before they could be pulled into the chipper. (Dan Benton, Sally Lowder, and Sam Beard)



Golden aspens and piles of brush removed from the island in the snowplay area.

Photo by Eric Russell

Recertification of Crosscut Sawyers

Every three years, FOSM'S crosscut sawyers renew their certifications for their work on the Cibola National Forest, Sandia Ranger District. In July, 2015, Kerry Wood, C-advanced Crosscut Sawyer and Trails and Wilderness Program Manager for the Sandia Ranger District, recertified six volunteers: Dan Benton, Bill Savage, Pete Rhyns, Jim Lunn, Chris Fritzsche and Bill White. Their certifications now end in July, 2018. Five new trainees: Steve Roholt, Roger Wrolstad, Bet Gendron, Jim Levesque and Eric Russell will be tested later in September 2015. Carl Smith, a long time crosscut sawyer will also have his recertification in September. (Sally Lowder)

Certification of Chainsaw Sawyers

FOSM chainsaw sawyers are recertified every three years. Bill Savage met the criteria for recertification this year and is now certified until 2018. Likewise, Eric Russell, a Trainee, fulfilled his work for chainsaw certification and has now joined the sawyers roster. (Sally Lowder)

CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens and First Aid Training

Twenty-one FOSM volunteers fulfilled their class room obligations (to continue as crosscut or chainsaw operators as well as for new trainees) for Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP), First Aid and CPR trainings for 2015. Every two years we must recertify for CPR and every three years for First Aid. BBP is still only good for one year. FOSM members participating were Bob Lowder, Sam Beard, Dan Benton, Bill Savage, Carl Smith, Paul Torno, Diana Filliman, Rav Nicholson, Linda McDowell, Jerry Pekarek, Jim Levesque, Eric Russell, Steve Roholt, Roger Wrolstad, Dave Gabel, Pete Rhyns, Bill White, Dennis Crowther, Jim Lunn , Chris Fritzsche and Bet Gendron. (Sally Lowder)

FOSM Publications

Recreation Guide to the Sandia and Manzanita Mountains - This year we continued to distribute this free visitors guide that includes information about picnic areas, camping, volunteer work, parking fees and passes, wilderness restrictions, temperatures and precipitation, maps, trail lengths and difficulty, and Leave No Trace. The guide is available at the Ranger Station, Crest Visitor Center, REI, Albuquerque Convention and Visitor Bureau, and Tinkertown. In addition, they are frequently distributed at all FOSM outreach activities. (Don Carnicom)

Field Guide to the Sandia Mountains UNM Press reports that 12,428 copies of this book have been sold. (Gerry Sussman)

FOSM Email Notification Groups

Communication to and between members is important for most organizations, and ours is no exception. Several years ago FOSM

created three email groups using the Yahoo Groups system which is provided at no cost.

Friends of Sandias – This group of about 105 email addresses is made up only of current members of the Friends of the Sandia Mountains. It is used to provide information that pertains only to FOSM members, such as election matters, etc. Messages going out to this group must be approved by one of our assigned moderators.

NMFOF/Volunteers – This group of about 300 email addresses is made up of all FOSM members, other authorized USFS/SRD volunteers and others who have expressed an interest in receiving the information it provides. This system provides announcements of FOSM projects, monthly FOSM meetings, information from our partners at the USFS Sandia Ranger District, etc. Messages to this group also require approval by a moderator. (NMFOF stands for New Mexico Friends of the Forest, our original and corporate name.)

Cibola Trail Rangers – This group of 118 email addresses provides a forum for anyone to report trail conditions on our Sandia trails. Many of our projects have resulted from information provided on this system. Messages posted on this system do not require moderator approval. (Bob Lowder)

Sandia Ranger District Signage Program

A number of years ago the FOSM Signage Committee undertook a project to inventory all signs on the Sandia Ranger District, evaluate which signs needed to be replaced, then design, purchase and install the signs on a timely basis. These activities were completed with the majority of the replacement signs being installed in the Crest, Tram, and Kiwanis Meadow

areas. Maintenance, such as graffiti removal and complete sign replacement was performed as required throughout the year. In particular two signs around Kiwanis Meadow and two Scenic Byway signs were replaced. This depletes all spare replacements signs for the Kiwanis Meadow area. Significant graffiti was removed from all signs on the Balsam Glade Nature Trail. Plans are underway to replace all of the signs as UV degradation is significant. Also other miscellaneous signs will be ordered at the same time for other locations on the district.

The sign inventory for the District was updated again this year as changes occurred and electronic files were supplied to the SRD staff. (Don Carnicom)

FOSM Records Retention

Throughout the year we continued to get our corporate records collected and filed. Now all electronic files and hard copy records are stored in a locked cabinet in the FOSM office at the Ranger Station. The electronic files are stored on a flash drive that is updated about twice a year. A duplicate set of files is kept on another flash drive and on a hard drive. Any director issuing a document they wish to have retained can copy it to the email address, fosmrecords@friendsofthesandias.org, and it will end up on the flash drive. All of the hard copy records were scanned this year and added to the other electronic records. (Don Carnicom)

FOSM Outreach

*** Celebrate Wildlife Event at Wildlife West** – On June 20 the Wildlife West Nature Park celebrated wildlife with their “Wildlife Festival”. Many wildlife oriented organizations such as FOSM, US Forest service, NM Game and Fish, NM

Herpetological Society, Sandia Mountain Bear Watch, NM Wilderness Alliance, The Peregrine Foundation and a number of others participated. On the order of 100 people passed through the Bean Barn where each organization had a table displaying their handouts, literature, photos, and in some cases live animals. Don Carnicom manned the FOSM table for about 7 hours. We passed out a number of Recreation Guides, FOSM membership applications, SRD Trail Maps and other literature. It is felt this is a good event for FOSM as it reaches out to a variety of people, and many more now know about FOSM than did before. (Don Carnicom)



Death Camas on the Crest Spur Trail on the Wildflower Walk on August 11, 2015
Photo by Chris Husted

13th Annual Sandia Mountain Snowshoe Race

The 13th Annual Sandia Mountain Snowshoe Race, presented by Friends of the Sandia Mountains, was held January 17, 2015. The Race began at 10:00 am on a beautiful winter day at the lower level parking lot at Sandia Crest. 95 entrants aged 10 to 87 ran, walked and sauntered the 5-km trek through beautiful trails in the Cibola National Forest. The registration fees were lowered to encourage families to attend together.

This race is the Friends of the Sandia Mountains main money-raising event and all proceeds support the work of the group in the on-going care and maintenance of trails and picnic areas on the mountain.

Participants were treated to pre-and post-race refreshments, gifts and prizes in several categories. A change this year was the gift of a race “beanie” and pin, instead of a t-shirt for each entrant.

In the 2015 race, the best overall female time was posted by Michelle Hummel at 0:32:39. Best male time and overall winner was Steve Clarke with a time of 0:31:43. The youngest female racer was Emily Clarke, age 14 and youngest male was Samuel Gludicissi, age 10.

The 2015 Race was blessed with the support of over 36 local sponsors contributing donations used for prizes, gift bags, food and drink. Thank you, sponsors!

2015 Race Organizational Committee

Lou Romero, Race Director
Bob and Sally Lowder
Anne Hickman
Linda McDowell
Mike Coltrin
Jim Lunn
Joy Bosquez
Beth Corwin
(Linda McDowell)



Dan Benton at the stump of the tree he felled in Sulphur Picnic Area with the Stihl Model 660 saw with a 36-inch bar.

Photo by Carl Smith

Adopt-A-Trail Program-

With two weeks left in the fiscal year, seven Adopt-A-Trail groups have reported a total of 450 hours of trail work. The groups reporting so far are Friends of Piedra Lisa South (AKA, Bill and Debbie Velasquez, Piedra Lisa South Trail), Friends of the Sandia Mountains (Tecolote Trail and Cienega Nature Trail), New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors (Pino Trail), Rav and Ken Nicholson (10K South Trail), Southwest Forest Service Amigos (Oso Corredor Trail and North Crest Trail), Tinkertown Museum (Cienega Horse Bypass), and Linda McDowell (10K North Trail). In addition, the New Mexico Mountain Club has a trail maintenance outing on their schedule (South Crest Trail). The Southwest Forest Service Amigos had the most total hours this past year with 92 and the most individual outings with six. (Dan Benton)

Adopt-A-Trail Report for Cienega Nature Trail

Cienega Nature Trail has been adopted by FOSM, and volunteers worked on this trail on two outings.

1. Maintenance on May 20

a. Bridge Repairs -- Volunteers replaced a broken 2 x 8 board in a bridge across the road from the second restroom. Don Carnicom designed and installed a short wooden ramp at one end of the steel middle bridge where the sidewalk had settled about 3 inches below the end of the bridge so that this bridge will be wheelchair accessible.

b. Upper Handrail/Fence Repair -- Volunteers replaced two 2 x 4s and two 2 x 6s in the upper handrail/fence along the trail.

c. Lower Fence – Other volunteers replaced a pole and stabilized a post in the lower fence.

d. Pruning – Volunteers cut grass and pruned brush and trees along the Nature Trail and raked and swept this paved trail.

2. Maintenance on July 1

a. Trail Maintenance – Volunteers cut the tall grass along the paved Nature Trail with the FOSM power clearing saw with the plastic blade attachment. They also removed the cut grass and dirt from the trail and used the FOSM power blower to blow dust and leaves from the pavement. This nature trail is one of the two trails adopted by FOSM. (Jim Lunn)

b. Painting Benches on Cienega Nature Trail – Volunteers painted three benches on the Nature Trail with green Behr Deck Over paint purchased at a reduced price to use as a primer on old wooden tables. The benches had deep cracks that were filled with the thick Deck Over paint. The FOSM paint crew will cover the green paint with the

regular BBQ brown paint on a future project. (Sam Beard)

Adopt-A-Trail Report for Tecolote Trail

Tecolote Trail is the other trail adopted by FOSM, and work was done on two outings.

1. Trail Maintenance – On July 1 volunteers cut the extensive oak brush along this trail with loppers and Sam's power brush cutter. Three fallen trees with diameters of 10" to 12" were removed, two with a crosscut saw and one with a chain saw. This trail was busy Wednesday morning with three groups of hikers passing us. We will work on the trail tread here later with Kerry Wood, SRD Wilderness and Trails Manager, who wants to replace water bars with structures that will be easier to cross on mountain bikes.

2. Removing a Large Hang-up – On July 8, volunteers hiked up Tecolote Trail to just past the north end of the ridge. Here they removed an 18-inch diameter pine hang-up. The trunk was bucked into movable lengths and the slash was scattered. (Sam Beard)

Wildflower Walks

Saturday morning Wildflower Walks, sponsored by the Sandia Ranger District and FOSM from the beginning of June to end of August, had the best attendance in many years. Because of the spring rains, wildflowers were abundant, and no walks needed to be canceled for forest closures. Larry Littlefield's and Pearl Burns's book, **Wildflowers of the Northern and Central Mountains of New Mexico** was available to the public just before the season started, and that stirred additional interest in the outings.

The walks were on a different trail each week in the Sandias and Manzanita Mountains averaging about 2.5 miles each

with many pauses for photos and discussion. The final August walks were in a Bernalillo County Open Space area near Cedro.

Volunteer leaders this year were Mari Draper, Vicki Farrar, Dick Fredrickson, Chris Husted, Larry Littlefield, Marj Patrick, and Jean Payne. More leaders are always useful. (Jean Payne)

Paint Crew Report

The FOSM Paint Crew leader Jane Harrison stepped down this year leaving some large shoes to fill, given her many years of volunteer service, knowledge and experience. It took two people to fill those shoes, Anne Hickman and Angela Welford, who took over leadership of the Paint Crew in June 2015. Fortunately, faithful volunteers from past years have helped make their job easier. Volunteers include Rikki Barrett, Joy Bosquez, Sara Morlan, Ellie Parker, Russell Parker, and Jean Payne. Jane Harrison joined us for our first few projects which was very helpful and most welcome. New volunteer Diana Helgesen joined the crew in September.

The following Paint Crew projects were completed this summer:

- 1. Crest Parking Lot** – Painted parking stripes and helicopter landing pad and removed graffiti from shelter and restrooms.
- 2. Cienega Canyon Picnic Area** – Painted parking stripes, information signs, handrails, benches, bridge railing, entrance sign, USFS trash bins (5), and pay station tube (1).
- 3. Sulphur Canyon PA** -- Painted parking stripes, information signs, and restroom doors

4. Balsam Glade PA -- Painted information sign at entrance, viewing bench at lookout, and removed graffiti from interpretive signs on nature trail.

5. Las Huertas PA – Painted parking stripes, entrance sign, and one pay station tube.

6. Cedro Group Campground -- Painted trash bins, one small sign, wooden benches in both areas, all hand railings and many 2-foot posts lining the driveways to the picnic tables, and both metal gates leading into the camping areas. (Angela Welford and Anne Hickman)

Membership and Financial Report

We now have 109 memberships, the same as last year at this time. We added 13 new memberships this year. New members are David Broudy, Gay Huffman, Roger Wrolstad, Joelle Hertel, Simeon Cook, David Hancock, Michael Thomas, Brian Bottorff, Beth Cohen, Karl Malcolm, Byron Garner, Renee Robillard and Jerry Carroll. Welcome aboard everyone! (Timothy Brown)

In October 2014, Art Arenholz completed an audit of the FOSM financial records. He reported the records to be accurate and in good shape. Also in November, Tim Brown completed an audit of all of the FOSM physical assets. (Timothy Brown)

We began FY2015 on October 1, 2014, with a checking account balance of \$25,191.18 and on August 31, 2015, the balance was \$19,288.80. We also have two CDs which total \$41,315.43. The largest expenses were \$1,560.40 for projects. The largest revenues were \$965.00 from donations, \$1,056.63 from the Snowshoe Race after expenses and

\$1,695.00 from memberships. (Timothy Brown)



Ellie Parker (L) and Sara Morlan painting in Cienega Canyon Picnic Area.
Photo by Angela Welford

National Trails Day FOSM Project

On National Trails Day (NTD) on June 6, 2015, twelve FOSM volunteers replaced a horse gate and pedestrian zig-zag gate along the western SRD boundary near the intersection of Trails 305A and 342 with a simple opening 45 inches wide. This access point to the Sandia Mountain Wilderness is located along the eastern boundary of Albuquerque's Simms Park southeast of the Elena Gallegos (EG) Picnic Area. Kerry Wood, SRD Trails and Wilderness Program Manager, had suggested this work as the FOSM NTD project .

A wilderness sign and a **No Bicycles** sign were attached to the posts on either side of the opening with screws. Remaining posts, wire, hardware, and the horse gate were carried back to the SRD truck for disposal.

On our way back to the picnic area, we saw about two dozen Open Space volunteers collecting cholla cactus cuttings and

planting them in a former ranch road that had been closed by earlier construction of numerous earthen and rock berms. Because we finished our project early, several of our volunteers elected to help plant cacti until lunch.

Dan Benton and Sam Beard returned the USFS truck to the SRD shop, unloaded the tools, disposed of debris, and returned to EG PA. At noon the volunteers gathered at the Kiwanis Shelter for a sandwich and chips lunch provided by Albuquerque Open Space Division and food donors. After the lunch, tickets were given to the volunteers, and numerous donated prizes were handed out. Some of the FOSM volunteers received prizes. (Sam Beard and Dan Benton)

Trees Removed from Trails

FOSM maintains the Cibola Trail Rangers email reporting group of 118 members. All the tree reporting is kept on a chart with the date, trail name, problem and person reporting the trail issues. It also includes the date, trail, the number of trees removed and the person(s) doing the work. It also should be known that while we have had, as an example, 3 trees reported on a specific trail, our crews find that at the end of the day, 12 trees were removed. The forest somehow doesn't keep track of how many trees it drops at any given time. Therefore, I have not included how many trees were reported, as it would be much lower.

We wish to thank all the volunteers and others who hike the trails and report problems on those trails or who actually do work to one extent or another on the trails. Many of the volunteers are FOSM members and many are not. They are people who love the mountain and participate in many of the activities that can be found in the Sandia Mountains. There were 172 trees removed

from the trails this year. There were 7 additional trees removed by the unknown “forest gnome”. We wish to thank that gnome for the hard work! A total of 179 trees were removed, many of which were removed by people who have not participated in the regular Monday or Wednesday outings. These people are Dave Gabel, Pauline Ho/Richard Buss, Tim Brown, SW Forest Amigos, Steve Graham, Marc Basiliere, Gordon Eatman, David Broudy, Don Hoke and Bob Galloway.

In addition to these trees, Bob Lowder reported that the FOSM Trails Crew removed 107 trees. These trees are ones that are in the most remote parts of the mountain, require hikes up to 10 miles and tend to be the larger trees that need to be removed, as well as, large groups of trees in one area. A huge “Thank You” should go out to these volunteers burdened by gear and facing adverse conditions, yet who boldly go where others dare not go!!!! (Sally Lowder)

Report of the FOSM Trail Maintenance Crew

Using the FOSM Cibola Trail Rangers Yahoo email group, volunteers hiking on the District are able to report fallen trees and other problems found on the trail system. The fallen trees are recorded and tracked on the Trail Tree Report that is maintained and distributed by FOSM Board member Sally Lowder. Based upon this report, volunteers are able to identify where problems exist on the trails and to plan for ways to address these problems. Although there are times when a number of trees are reported down on a trail, more commonly there are a few or even a single tree reported. There is then not enough work to send a large crew out, such as the size of those that frequently show up for the usual Wednesday projects, so that is

where the FOSM Trail Maintenance Crew comes in.

This crew consists of individuals who have expressed a desire to do this type of work. Their names are included on an email list and they are contacted as trail work hikes are scheduled, usually on Mondays. Depending on the location of the work, a chainsaw or crosscut saws are used to remove the fallen trees. Hand tools such as a cant hook, Pulaski, loppers, hedge trimmers or other hand tools are also used.

During the period October 2014 through August 2015 the crew removed a total of 107 fallen trees from Sandia District trails. (Bob Lowder)

Five Cords of Fuelwood Donated

Five cords of fuelwood collected by volunteers were donated to organizations for needy families.

* **3/25/15** - Six loads of wood from the traffic circle and above the restroom in Sulphur PA were hauled to the Hazmat building. Donated later to a needy family.

* **6-25-15** – Two cords of wood from Sulphur traffic circle donated to Mtn. Christian Church Wood Ministry.

* **Early-August** – Donated ½-cord wood from old road at Doc Long PA to MCCWM.

* **Mid-August** – Donated ½-cord wood from Balsam Glade YMCA Camp site to MCCWM. (Sam Beard)



Pat Benton sitting at the restored hanging table in Juan Tabo Picnic Area.
Photo by Dan Benton

Restoration of Juan Tabo Picnic Area Hanging Table

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) completed construction of the Juan Tabo Picnic Ground in 1935 or 1936. One picnic site included a hanging table anchored to a large boulder at one end, and the other end was suspended from the same boulder by three pieces of chain.

As part of the planned restoration of this picnic ground, FOSM members volunteered to restore this table. Although the wooden table top and most of the suspension chains were missing, the following parts of this table were still at the site: both concrete and stone benches, two steel hooks anchored in the boulder that supported one end of the

table, and a turnbuckle and short piece of large chain which were anchored high on the boulder.

The design of the restored table was based on information obtained from an undated historic photograph. The 72-inch x 40.8-inch table was constructed with local custom-milled 2-5/8-inch thick pine lumber. One end of the table is supported by hooks in the boulder, and the other end is suspended by three pieces of 1/2-inch steel chain with connectors, and the original turnbuckle. The authors and Jim Levesque installed the restored table at the original site on July 24, 2015. (Dan Benton, Jim Lunn, Sam Beard)

Black Bear DNA Project

For the second consecutive year members of FOSM have participated along with other volunteers in the New Mexico Black Bear DNA Project for the Sandia Mountains, a project sponsored by NM Department of Game and Fish, County of Bernalillo, City of Albuquerque, Pueblo of Sandia, US Forest Service, Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, and Bosque School.

This project was part of a state-wide project initiated at New Mexico State University to obtain better bear population numbers using improved scientific and statistical methods, but the data collection in the Sandia Mountains was the only part of the effort relying on the efforts of volunteers. Under the study design, a single-strand barbed wire loop snare was placed around a non-nutritive lure (blood/skunk scent) in each of twelve 25 sq km sectors covering bear habitat in the Sandia Ranger District north of I-40. In addition, short strands of barbed wire were fixed to power poles and trees showing use by bears as rubs.

Organizational and planning meetings were held in February 2015 along with training sessions in April and May. The loop hair snares were initially set out in mid-May with the final take-down in early August. Hair samples were collected every two weeks, with hair from each barb secured in individual envelopes with precise notations about date and location; followed by relocation of the loop snare elsewhere within its sector. Sam Beard, Don Carnicom, Linda McDowell, Jim Lunn, and Jim Loner participated in the setting of rub hair snares along power poles on the line running up to the Crest on the east side. Dan Benton participated for the second year in the two sectors assigned to the Bosque School covering Pino and Embudito Canyons on the west side. Students from the Bosque School and Albuquerque Academy were major participants in this effort.

Collected samples will be sent to a specialized lab in British Columbia, Canada for DNA testing with results expected in the summer of 2016. During the 2014 effort volunteers collected 179 samples, while this past summer we collected 294 samples. Data collected and analyzed from 2014 yielded an estimate of 55.2 bears in the Sandias, an increase in the number predicted by earlier methodologies. If funding is available, the effort will be repeated in 2016.

In order to share information about black bears in the Sandias with the public, the same groups hosted the annual Sandia Mountain Bear Fair at The City of Albuquerque Simms Park (Elena Gallegos Picnic Area) on September 20. Linda McDowell and Jim Lunn displayed the various stages of chain saw carving a bear likeness from a log and answered questions from the public attendees. Don Carnicom set up a display about FOSM and educated the

public about our organization. Dan Benton helped both with setup. (Dan Benton)

Volunteers Felled 473 Danger Trees

Volunteers continued felling danger trees in picnic areas and at trailheads during FY2015. Kerry Wood, SRD Trails and Wilderness Program Manager, used the Southwestern Region Danger Tree Evaluation Form to designate trees with the following defects as danger trees: dead, dying, dead branches, exposed roots, cracks in trunk, lightning scar, leaning, insect damage, dead top, trunk wounds, forked trunks, cankers, bole (trunk) decay, cavities, and disease.

The number of danger trees felled in the picnic areas and at trailheads from September 2014 through August 2015 is given in the table below. The total number of felled trees was 473 in these outings. The maximum diameter was 31 inches. The slash (branches) of the felled trees was chipped with the large Sandia Ranger District chipper. (Sam Beard)

Site	Trees Felled
Cienega Can. PA	81
Doc Long PA	10
Sulphur Can. PA	27
Tree Spring TH	10
Dry Camp TH	6
Ski Area OF Parking	14
Balsam Glade PA	86
Capulin Spring PA	6
Snow Play Area	46
Nine Mile PA	22
10KN Trailhead	31
Las Huertas PA	85
Oak Flat PA	4
Cedro Group CG	45
Total	473

Programs at Monthly Meetings

This year we had the following presentations at our first-Tuesday monthly meetings:

- * March - Pauline Ho told us about her recent touring and hiking trip to Japan with some wonderful accompanying photos.
- * April - Mike Madden recounted his exciting hike along the Hayduke Trail in southern Utah from Capitol Reef National Park to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Park.
- * May - Dick Brown explained how he spearheaded a successful effort to have our new submarine named the U.S.S. New Mexico.
- * June - Larry Littlefield showed us and told us about many of the beautiful flowers that appear in his and Pearl Burns' new book, **Wildflowers of the Northern and Central Mountains of N.M.**
- * July - We learned about Mystery Rock from John Taylor. This rock, with a Paleo-Hebraic inscription has long fascinated many hikers.
- * August - Dixie Boyle, a fire lookout on Capilla Peak, spoke about her recent book, **The Enchantment of New Mexico.**
- * September - Linda McDowell talked about her visit to eight spectacular Mayan sites in Guatemala and Belize.
- * October - Dr. Gary Morgan will tell us about what his many years of research has revealed about the controversial Sandia Cave. (Gerry Sussman)



Crew at new sign at the junction of Cienega and Faulty Trails. L to R: Bob Lowder, Kerry Wood, Paul Torno, Jim Levesque, and Rav Nicholson. Photo by Sally Lowder

Chipping Slash at Various Sites

Each year volunteers use the large SRD Vermeer chipper to chip slash resulting from brush cutting and tree felling at the Ranger Station and various picnic areas. The chips are blown into the adjacent forest at each location.

Numerous piles of slash were chipped on the following dates:

- * **10/8/14** – Doc Long, Dry Camp, and Capulin PAs, and Ellis Trailhead.
- * **10/22/14** – Capulin Snowplay Area
- * **10/29/14** – Capulin Snowplay Area
- * **5/27/15** – Oak Flat Group PA and Cedro Group Campground
- * **6-17-15** – Cienega and Sulphur Canyons PAs, Balsam Glade and Nine Mile PAs, Dry

Camp Trailhead and Ski Area Overflow Parking Area.

Projects Related to Providing Water for Wildlife

Numerous trick tanks that collect rain and dispense water to wildlife at float valve-controlled drinkers are located on the Sandia Ranger District. A few such trick tanks and drinkers are in the Military Withdrawal Area (MWA) east of the main Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) and west of David Canyon south of the Ranger Station. This area is closed to public entry. FOSM volunteers have been maintaining drinkers on KAFB and in the MWA for about 2 years upon the recommendation of Zachary Parsons, former Sandia District Wildlife Biologist, to his USAF counterpart, Dustin Akins, KAFB Natural/Cultural/Tank Management.

1. Bonito Canyon Drinker Project

The Bonito Canyon trick tank is located in Bonito Canyon between David Canyon to the east and Madera Canyon to the west.

Accessing this trick tank from KAFB requires a long drive eastward over a rough dirt road. Dan Benton and Sam Beard obtained permission through Dustin Akins to work around this trick tank by entering the MWA from the Forest Road 530 gate west of David Canyon on December 12.

This gate is locked with a USAF lock, and the volunteers hiked with their equipment one mile to the trick tank.

Dale Hall, retired NM Game and Fish Department wildlife water manager, had requested that we clear vegetation from around such drinkers to a radius of 50 feet to encourage deer to use the drinkers by reducing the threat of mountain lion predation. The objective of this project was

to remove some cover vegetation in a 50-foot radius circle around the drinker.

The area around the drinker was thinned by removing all trees and brush with diameters less than about 6 inches. The slash was scattered and placed in low piles outside the cleared circle.

Seven FOSM volunteers working on this project. Sam and Dan will invite other FOSM volunteers to participate in future projects to maintain wildlife water sources on KAFB and in the MWA. Participants must either have personal access to KAFB or be escorted by someone who does. All work must be approved in advance by the Air Force.

2. Burn Site Drinker Project

On July 3, 2015, Dan Benton, Dennis Crowther, Doug Thiesen, and Sam Beard performed maintenance on the Burn Site wildlife drinker south of the Sandia Laboratories Burn Site located in the Manzanita Mountains east of Kirtland Air Force Base. Dustin Akins, KAFB Natural Resources Department, gave permission to do the work and provided the key to access the Burn Site.

The volunteers completed the following tasks:

1. Float Valve Replacement – The damaged brass float valve at the drinker that controls the level of water in the trough was replaced.

2. Clearing the vegetation around the drinker to a radius of 50 feet –The volunteers used chain saws and a power brush cutter to cut tall grass, weeds, brush, and small trees around the drinker. Pinon trees with a diameter of 6 inches or more were limbed to improve visibility around them.

3. The slightly-sloped corrugated steel rain collector and the water storage tank with wings appeared to be in good condition. The depth of the water in the tank was only about 6 inches. (Dan Benton and Sam Beard)

Other Projects

* **Equipment Maintenance** – Jim Lunn and other volunteers continue to maintain the equipment used by the FOSM members. This equipment includes 10 chain saws and the Stihl 450 Clearing Saw. On December 17 Linda McDowell, Jim Lunn, Bill Savage, and Sam Beard sharpened 18 saw chains and cleaned a dozen saws at the SRD shop. Linda reorganized the FOSM parts cabinet by putting the parts in separate sets of drawers and making a list of the parts. (Sam Beard and Linda McDowell)

* **Maintenance of Three Neglected Trails**
For the first time in several years, volunteers worked on three trails that had not been maintained recently. Las Huertas Overlook Trail goes from Capulin Snowplay Area along old logging roads to Las Huertas Canyon Overlook. Capulin Peak Trail leads from the Snowplay Area to Capulin Peak, the site of a former fire lookout tower. Del Agua Trail goes from Piedra Lisa North Trailhead to the south along the foothills and up Del Agua Canyon to a junction with Piedra Lisa Trail.

* **Cutting Brush near Sulphur Canyon Picnic Area** – Near the entrance to Sulphur Canyon Picnic Area and at the intersection of Cienega Road and the Crest Highway, the volunteers cut willow brush with brush cutters and chain saws on September 10., (Sam Beard)

* **Pruning at Oak Flat Group Picnic Area** – On February 12 volunteers worked with Kerry Wood, SRD Trails and Wilderness

Program Manager, to do general brush cutting along roads and parking lots in the Oak Flat Group Picnic Area. They also pruned an extra wide unpaved strip along a parking lot edge at one place that will be part of an official mountain bike race later in the year. (Sam Beard)

The Case of the Buried Camera

While felling trees in Cienega Picnic Area, I noticed something shiny, poking out of the dirt. Thinking it was an old soda can, I dug it up to throw away. Surprisingly, it was a shiny, silver Sony camera! Then the detective work began. After a thorough cleaning, the picture disc was removed and revealed 136 photos, dated 2006 to 2009. **The camera had remained buried for six years.**

The first series were photos of a military nature. All the individuals had their names on their uniforms. Other series narrowed down the cast of possible owners as one single person's photo appeared repeatedly in each separate series of photos through those years, including the last pictures as he and a child hiked in the Sandia Mountains.

Using the most likely name, the internet revealed he was on LinkedIn and there was his picture, the perfect confirmation of ownership. Another search revealed an address and a phone number. After overcoming his shock that he had been tracked down with only the photos on the camera, he called and left his mailing address. He was very pleased to get the missing photos of those years of his life. (Linda McDowell)

Sign Post Installations

During FY2015, volunteers worked with Kerry Wood, SRD Trails and Wilderness Program Manager, and Ryan Reineke, Trails Foreman, to dig post holes and install signs at many locations. Post holes are dug with the following tools: (a) In soil and rocks – Posthole diggers and steel rock bars, and (b) Stone – Electric generator-powered impact drills and hammers. Posts are usually set in holes that are at least 24 inches deep. Hole depths in stone may be only 14 inches.

Composite signs are made with computer-controlled routers and are usually bolted to pressure-treated wooden posts and installed with or without concrete. In locations with severe weather and/or frequent vandalism, thick steel plate signs made with a cutting torch and welded to a steel pipe post are installed and allowed to rust naturally. When posts are set in concrete, dry quick-setting concrete is put into the hole around the post, water is added, and the water and concrete are mixed. Rock bars and/or digging bars are used to tamp dirt and rocks around wooden posts to obtain a well-set post. Removal of the old sign post is frequently more difficult than installing the new post. (Sam Beard)

Date	Locations (TH – Trailhead) (THs, Trail Junctions, etc.)	No. of Posts	Sign Material	Post	Concrete
10/01/14	10KN TH; 10KS TH; 10KS/Challenge; Challenge at Ellis TH; Ellis TH on Crest Hwy; Service Rd Gate; Rocky Point N TH; Rocky Point S TH.	9	Composite	Wood	No
10/08/14	Switchback/Service Rd; Gravel Pit N/S Crest Trail; Switchback/S Crest	4	Composite	Wood	No
11/05/14	Crest Area: Drilled 4 holes in limestone	---	---	---	---
	Challenge at Ski Area; Service Rd/Upper Tram Terminal; Gravel Pit/Tram Terminal; Switchback/Buried Cable; Kiwanis Meadow Rd/Switchback	6	Composite	Wood	No
03/11/15	Armijo TH/Cienega Host Site; Armijo/Faulty; Faulty/Horse Bypass; Wolf Sprg/Sulphur PA; Wolf Sprg/Doc Long PA; Lower Bill Spring TH.	6	Composite	Wood	No
03/18/15	Lower La Luz TH, Wilderness Bndy	2	Steel	Steel	Yes
	Wilderness Bndy Sign on Tramway Trail N of La Cueva PA and S of La Cueva PA.	2	Steel	Steel	No
	Wilderness Bndy Sign on Piedra Lisa S	1	Steel	Steel	No
05/13/15	Cienega Horse BP at Cienega Rd; Armijo Tr. Sign at Cienega Host Site; Faulty/Cienega Trails (2)	4	Composite	Wood	No
05/20/15	Wilderness Bndy on S Crest below Upper Tram Terminal; S Crest Tr. Sign below Upper Tram Terminal; N Crest Sign at Crest Parking Lot.	3	Steel	Steel	Yes



Panoramic photo of thinned area around the Bonito Canyon Wildlife Drinker on KAFB located at the two chain saws in the center of the picture. L to R: John Wee, Dennis Crowther, Sam Beard, Dan Benton, Bet Gendron, and Jim Levesque. Photo by Carl Smith



Jim Lunn (L) and Bet Gendron cutting a log with a crosscut saw with perforated lance teeth. Photo by Carl Smith



Limbing felled tree in the Ski Area Overflow Parking Lot. L to R: Rav Nicholson, Jim Lunn (cutting stump), Carl Smith, Sam Beard, Linda McDowell, and Eric Russell.
Photo by Bet Gendron



Start of 13th Annual Snowshoe Race at Sandia Crest.
Photo by Sally Lowder

FOSM Project Participants

A total of 69 volunteers worked on at least one project in FY2015. About two dozen members frequently volunteer to work on the weekly Wednesday projects, and 10 to 20 member typically work each week. Ten members are on Jane Harrison's paint crew.

The FOSM officers, Board Members, and the Sandia Ranger District Staff appreciate very much the support of all the FOSM members. The volunteers who worked on FOSM projects in FY2015 were Bob and Sally Lowder, Dan and Pat Benton, Tim Brown, Don Carnicom, Dennis Crowther, Gordon Eatman, Diana Filliman, Chris Fritzsche, Bet Gendron, Steve Graham, Jane Harrison, Anne Hickman, Jim and Judy Levesque, Larry Littlefield, Jim Lunn, David McCreery, Linda McDowell, Bob Moore, Rav Nicholson, Russ and Ellie Parker, Jerry Pekarek, Pete Rhyins, Lou Romero, Rodger Sack, Bill Savage, Carl Smith, Gerry Sussman, Paul Torno, Bill White, Doug Thiesen, John Wee, Diana Helgesen, Rikki Barrett, Sara Morlan, Jean Payne, Joy Bosquez, Angela Welford, Mari Droper, Vicki Farror, Don Hoke, Bob Gallaway, Susan Smith, David Broudy, Scott Russell, Merrill Calaway, Pauline Ho, Richard Buss, Dave Gabel, Marc Basiliere, Dick Fredrickson, Chris Husted, Gay Huffman, Cameron Metzler, Rich Besser, Paul Torno, Joelle Hertel, Sim Cook, Steve Roholt, Eric Russell, Byron Garner, Jerry Carroll, Roger Wrolstad, Marj Patrick, and Sam Beard (Sam Beard)

Publication of the FY2015 Newsletter

A huge "Thank You" to the following people who contributed to the publication of the FY2015 Friends of the Sandia Mountains Annual Newsletter: authors who contributed articles, photographers who made informative and interesting pictures, reviewers who found errors in the early versions, and FOSM volunteers who completed the many projects for us to report. This is our year-end historical review that is available to all members, volunteers, and visitors to our meetings. (Sam Beard, Editor)

FOSM Officers

- * President – Bob Lowder
- * Vice-President – Gerry Sussman
- * Treasurer – Tim Brown
- * Secretary – Rav Nicholson

Board Members

- * Sam Beard
- * Dan Benton
- * Don Carnicom
- * Mike Coltrin
- * Sally Lowder
- * Jim Lunn
- * Lou Romero

Officers are also Board Members.

FRIENDS OF THE SANDIA MOUNTAINS

If you hike, bike, ride a horse or use the Sandia Mountains in any way, we know you enjoy what nature has given us. As you know, all this traffic takes a toll on our forest lands. Working in conjunction with the **United States Forest Service** as a volunteer organization, we provide many services in support of the Sandia Ranger District.

WHO WE ARE

Friends of the Sandia Mountains is a non-profit organization of local volunteers. We are dedicated to working in partnership with the USFS, other groups, and individuals to maintain, protect and restore the natural, cultural and scenic resources of New Mexico's forest lands for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. Our focus is conservation and education within the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest and adjacent lands.

WHAT IS THE NEED

This uniquely beautiful land can't wait another minute. It truly needs our help! As USFS funds are inadequate to handle the increasing demands on the forest land by the public, the Friends of the Sandia Mountains will work to help meet the forest needs. Learn more about how you can be a part of this vital effort.

WHAT WE DO

Conservation
Education
Restoration
Danger Tree Removal
Sponsor Annual Snowshoe Race
Trail Construction & Maintenance
Junior Ranger Program
Visitor Services
Published "Recreation Guide to Sandias"
Adopt-A-Trail
Co-publisher of **Field Guide to the Sandia Mtns.**

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN OR RENEW:

You can be part of this effort; work with friends, visitors and USFS personnel.

Tell us briefly how you would like to participate & we will get back to you.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone & Email _____

Dues:

- \$10 Student
- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$30 Sustaining
- \$50 Sponsor
- \$100 Benefactor
- \$250 Life Sponsor
- \$500 Corporate Sponsor

Please make your check payable to:
Friends of the Sandia Mountains

Mail To:

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www.friendsofthesandias.org

FOSM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible.