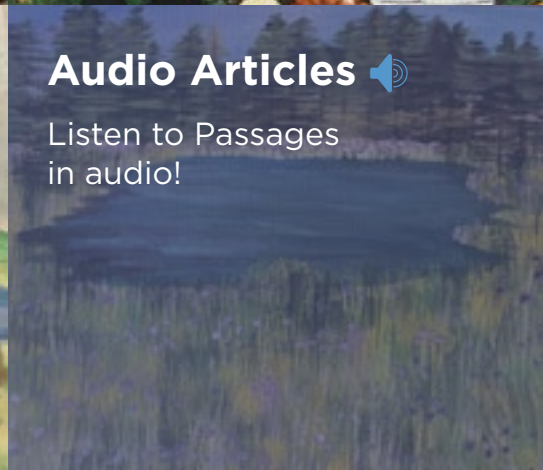


Passages

Continental Divide Trail Coalition | Volume 35, Winter 2025



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to
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the
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PASSAGES | A publication of the
Continental Divide Trail Coalition

5 Executive Director's Letter

7 A Shared Path
By Sharon Buccino

8 Planting a Legacy
By Audra Labert

12 Fueling the Work
By Teresa Martinez

**14 Looking Back to Look
Forward**
By Claire Cutler

16 Media Roundup

18 Supporters

**24 The Terminus |
Observations from the
Bootheel**
By Danny "Slapshot" Knoll

Cover art by artists from
the Community of Taos
Pueblo. More information
on pages 8-11.

Passages

Volume 35, Winter 2025

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

Photo Credit: Jess Cody

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

CDTC's mission is to complete, protect, and elevate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail while engaging in and inspiring stewardship of the trail and its surrounding landscapes.. CDTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations to CDTC are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

To donate, visit our website at cdtcoalition.org.

The Continental Divide Trail community are encouraged to submit story ideas and photographs for inclusion in Passages to the editor at communications@cdtcoalition.org. For more information about support for Passages, please contact development@cdtcoalition.org.

Continental Divide Trail Coalition
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear CDTC Friends,

Warm greetings from the Continental Divide Trail Coalition! As we close out another remarkable year, we want to thank you for your steadfast support. Our successes, from big to small, are possible because of you, and they're always more meaningful (and more fun!) when shared together.

This year, more than 500 CDTC volunteers contributed 13,916 hours of service, valued at \$484,138. Partners and Youth Conservation Corps crews added another 13,373 hours valued at \$465,247. Altogether, that's an incredible 27,289 hours and nearly \$950,000 in volunteer impact. Your dedication continues to strengthen the foundation needed to maintain, complete, and protect the CDT for future generations.

From installing kiosks and completing traditional trail work—including our first-ever volunteer-built rock crib—to training the next generation of Crew Chefs, we are so proud of what the CDT community is building together.

This fall, I had the privilege of serving as crew chef on two projects and helping lead our first crew chef training in many years. We weathered a storm on the Carson Legacy Project, shared laughter during training, and worked side by side on the Neglected Mine project, and I was reminded again and again how quickly strangers become a community when serving a shared purpose. The shared moments of sunrises, dark skies, wildlife encounters, teamwork, and purpose reinforced the importance of approaching our work with a grateful heart and an open mind.

As we wrap up another incredible year for CDTC, I am deeply grateful for the gifts we've been entrusted with and for the responsibility we share in returning those gifts to the CDT—and to one another. Thank you for all you do on behalf of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season, and I hope to see you on the trail in 2026!



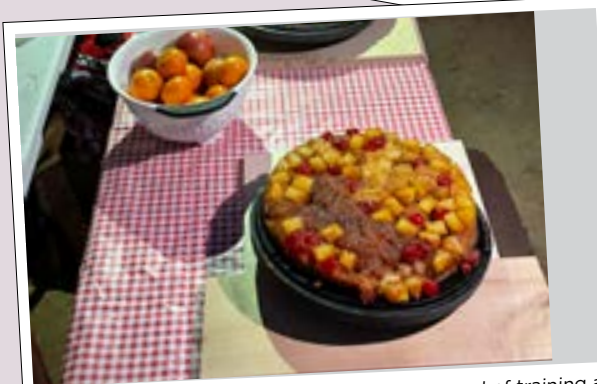
Teresa Ana Martinez
Teresa Ana Martinez
Executive Director
Continental Divide Trail Coalition



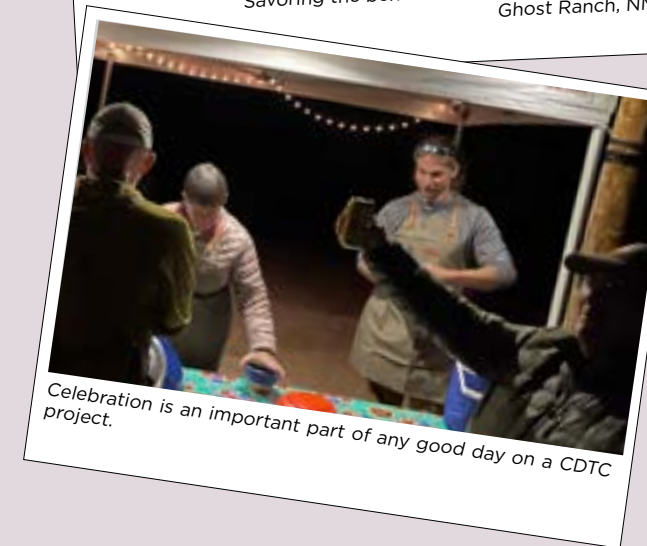
Taking in the sunset at the Neglected Mine project, NM.



A film crew joined the Neglected Mine project to document the magic. This project was made possible through generous support from Toyota and onX Maps.



Savoring the benefits of crew chef training at Ghost Ranch, NM.



Celebration is an important part of any good day on a CDTC project.

Explore the CDT

Download the Jr. Ranger Book!



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 [LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE](#)

A SHARED PATH

By Sharon Buccino, CDTC Board of Directors Secretary
Laramie, WY

I came for silence. Instead, the rain and hail pounded my old truck's top. A quick backpack trip on the southern section of the Continental Divide Trail in Wyoming started less than auspiciously.

I had driven 90 minutes west of Laramie, Wyoming—the place my husband and I have called home for the past six years. It is also home to the University of Wyoming, where I have taught Local Government and Legislation at the law school.

I came to Wyoming looking for something different after being disillusioned by the polarizing politics in Washington, DC. Opposing sides were pushed to the corners of the ring—posturing rather than conversing. Dialogue that could lead to understanding disappeared. The policy pendulum of DC's Presidential politics swung wider and wider.

Leaving behind a long career as an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national non-profit, I came to Wyoming looking for unity. Could conversations occur at the local level that were not happening nationally? Could I find solutions locally where I hadn't nationally? Following former Senator (and Gillette shoe store owner) Mike Enzi's counsel, I was prepared to lean into the 80% of what I could agree on with others rather than the 20% on which we might disagree.

I also came for the wild. I sought valleys where you could hear the gurgling streams. Wide, open plains where you could see for miles. And mountains where you could feel the wind—plenty of it.

I have found both “we” and “wild” on the CDT. Wet and weary, my spirit rose nonetheless as I walked south from Battle Pass into the Huston Wilderness. Like the trail that straddles the country's backbone, I've sought a middle path.

I've had all kinds of conversations while in Wyoming. I've listened to residents concerned about nuclear waste. And to others looking for ways to expand economic opportunity beyond oil, gas, and coal. I've listened to landowners upset about proposed wind towers on adjacent property, and to others looking to payments from wind companies to save their land.



Like the dark clouds above, despair sometimes settles in. While I'm focused on the 80 percent, are more and more people drawn to the 20? Is the space of disagreement and conflict easier? Am I selling out what I care most deeply about by trying to exist in the space of cooperation?

As I walked the CDT, my choice was simple. Keep walking and get wet. Or turn around and get wet. I kept walking. Although alone, I thought about civility. It's a positive word for me—a coming together; a willingness to work on the 80 percent; or at least to understand the interests behind the 20 percent.

I recently learned that “civility” is not positive for everyone. In her essay *Civility is a Fantasy*, Roxanne Gay writes, “calling for civility is about exerting power.” For Gay, civility requires us “to believe, despite so much evidence to the contrary, that the world is a fair and just place.”

While I likely agree with 80% of what Gay writes, I disagree with her disdain for civility. I recognize that the world is not fair and just. For me, civility—kindness and understanding —is how we change that. Gay asks us “to reject the fantasy of civility in favor of repair.” For me, civility is the pathway to repair.

We're in this together. It's why I joined CDTC's board. Working with the organization's dedicated and skilled staff, we're supporting the trail community as well as the gateway communities along the trail. May the CDT's shared path provide a model for the country.

As my day on the CDT ended, I looked for a place to pitch my tent. Rays of the setting sun broke through the clouds that illuminated the trees and ridges to the east. A piece of a rainbow emerged in the distance. Each one of us—as we tread our shared path—deserves a rainbow's joy.

Planting a Legacy

How a hiker's love for the CDT grew into lasting connection

By Audra Labert, CDTC Director of Communications

Many paths converge on trails. What inspires people to undertake a cross-continental journey is as varied as the landscapes they will traverse, but all share a common idea or vision of a destination—something that calls to leave home and strike out for something new.

In April of 2021, Joe “Plant” Schuler heeded that call. He accepted the challenge of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) and began hiking a section northbound that spring. Joe inherited a lifelong love for the outdoors from his family, and his newfound love of the CDT landscape was apparent to those close to him. At only 23 years old, he presumably had many more years and trails ahead, but tragically, Joe would not get the chance to take those trails. He passed away from natural causes in February of 2022 before beginning the next leg of his CDT hike.

In the wake of his passing, Joe’s parents, Bob and Vickie Schuler, approached the Continental Divide

Trail Coalition (CDTC) about setting up a memorial fund in Joe’s name. The fund would honor Joe’s life and passions, and help support the trail he had come to love. The story of his CDT experience first appeared in [CDTC’s Passages](#) in the spring of 2022. It would take three more years before the seed from that initial contact would fully bloom, and a memorial fund was just the beginning of the legacy Joe Schuler would leave on the CDT.

It’s often said that the CDT is more than a trail: It’s a watershed of over 80 million people, a lifeway for countless communities, an ecological reservoir and migration corridor for wildlife, and a sacred and culturally significant landscape cared for by Indigenous people since time immemorial. The trail is a thoroughway to something greater.

CDTC had hopes and a clear vision for sharing this full history and significance of the CDT landscape in a meaningful way, but lacked the financial means to make it happen. When the Schuler family approached the Coalition with the hopes of creating a lasting legacy for their son, the idea of a first-of-its-kind trailhead kiosk took root. Joe’s career as a teacher back home in Michigan, combined with his

“While traveling across these lands it’s important to acknowledge all the living creatures and the beautiful natural wonders that are cradled in the arms of these Sacred Mountains and waters, and who call this place home.”
— The Community of Taos Pueblo

deep passion for botany, also served as inspiration for the project. (Joe’s trail name, “Plant”, refers to this passion and also his resemblance to music icon Robert Plant.) Joe was dedicated to teaching, learning, and the outdoors.

What better way to honor him than to help others gain a deeper appreciation of a place he had come to love? The project began to take shape, and what came of this vision exceeded all expectations.

It might seem like a simple process, but constructing a stationary display that represents the complex history and ecology of a place is not a simple task. Over two years, CDTC—with the Schulers, partners, and Taos Pueblo—didn’t just collect pictures and descriptions to put on a standard. They gathered a community together to collectively decide: What are the most important things for someone to know about the land they’re standing on?

Since the project’s inception, that collective voice has now taken on public display in the form of story, art,

Tribal history, youth engagement and the teachings of Tribal elders, and of course, biology—Joe’s passion. The development of the kiosks became a collaboration with the Taos Pueblo through the Department of Conservation and Youth Learning Program. Through the support of [CDTC Tribal Fellow Cruz Concha](#), the group built relationships with poets, artists, elders, and youth from the Taos Pueblo and their contributions became part of the final vision.

From these connections, eight distinct trailheads now share the story of how the Taos Pueblo is connected to the landscapes along the CDT. What can be seen on those panels wasn’t created as a passing thought; it’s a carefully developed journey inspired by a shared love of the land.

Sometimes, trails lead to unexpected places. Taking the opportunity to learn more about a place and its people adds to the experience, knowledge, and love for these treasured outdoor spaces.

Continued on page 10



CDTC staff, volunteers, and partners raising a kiosk at Hopewell Lake.



Hopewell Lake kiosk panel.

FUELING THE WORK

CREATING A NEW GENERATION OF CREW CHEFS

By Teresa Martinez, CDTC
Executive Director

For years, CDTC's volunteer program was known not only for great crew leaders and stellar project sites, but also for the unforgettable meals cooked by our dedicated crew chefs. Dutch-oven lasagna, enchiladas, and the legendary upside-down pineapple cake became trail-crew lore. When several longtime chefs retired—and the pandemic disrupted gatherings—we risked losing that deep well of culinary expertise.

In 2025, thanks to a New Mexico Trails Plus grant from the NM Outdoor Recreation Department, CDTC relaunched the Crew Chef Program, beginning with a pilot training for New Mexico crews. This October, Executive Director Teresa Martinez, Director of Trail Programs L Fisher, and veteran chefs Ross Pope and Carole Owens hosted our first new Crew Chef Training at Ghost Ranch. With free camping, cafeteria meals, and beautiful outdoor teaching spaces, the venue set the perfect stage. New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors joined us as “test subjects” for our chefs-in-training.

We trained eight new crew chefs from across the country—Washington, South Dakota, Oregon, and New Mexico—including former CDT thru-hikers, a professional chef, a CDT section-hiker and retired dietician, and CDTC friends eager to support the trail in new ways. Over the 3-day course, participants learned field-kitchen setup, menu planning, food

safety, and how to keep volunteers happy, healthy, and well-fed.

A highlight was Ross Pope's Dutch-oven demo featuring two upside-down cakes (one gluten-free!), plus a full New Mexican dinner with green chile stew, cheese quesadillas, chips, salsa, and appetizers. These tasty creations were served to our NMVFO partners and met with rave reviews.

The weekend built community, rekindled traditions, and launched a new generation of crew chefs. One graduate, Jamie Fletcher, even put her training to immediate use by supporting the Neglected Mine Project in Silver City.

With this successful relaunch, we're planning additional trainings in Montana (2026), New Mexico, and Colorado. And we also plan to host a dutch oven training soon!

**To learn more about future
Crew Chef Trainings or
volunteer opportunities,
contact**

[volunteer@
cdtcoalition.org](mailto:volunteer@cdtcoalition.org)



BIG THINGS ARE COMING FOR THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL NEXT YEAR!

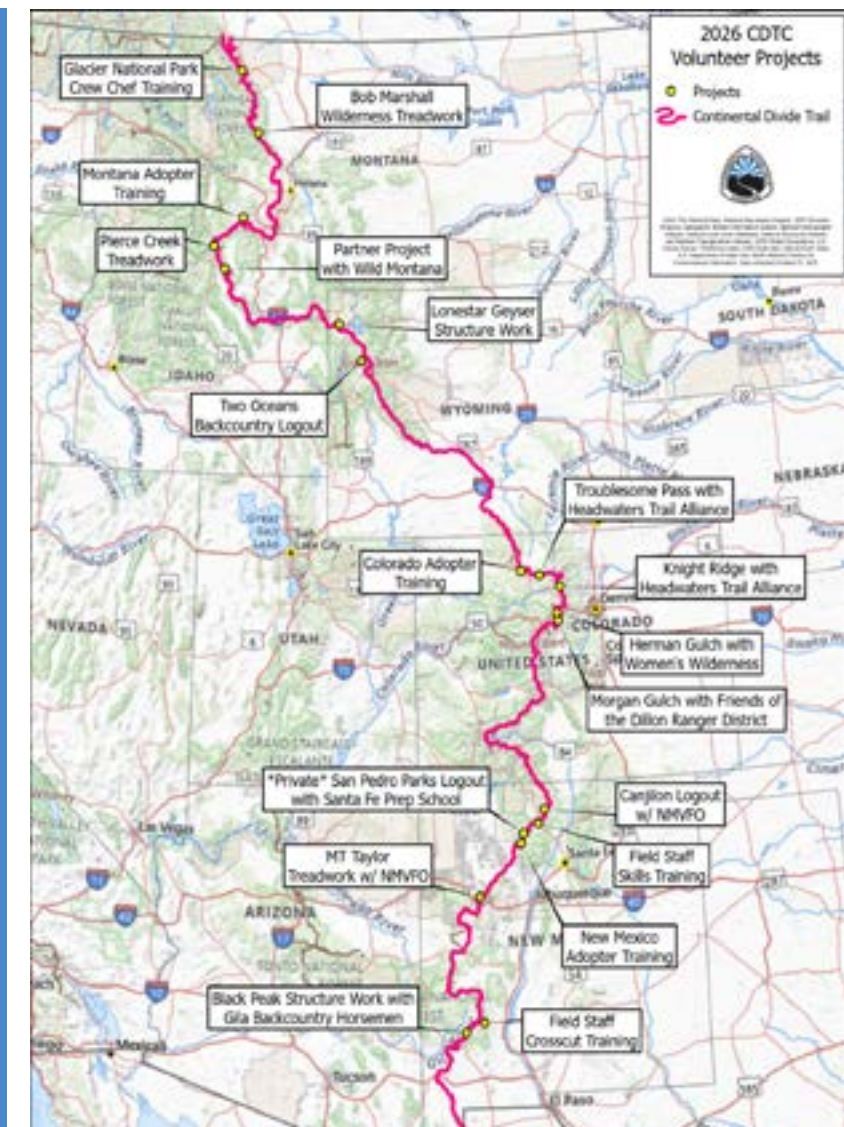
CDTC and partners are gearing up for the largest stewardship season in the CDT's history—52 trail projects planned to protect, complete, and maintain the trail.

**20 Professional GAOA Trail
Crew Projects**

17 Volunteer Trail Projects

**15 Community
Stewardship Projects**

Join our mailing
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updates!



2026 TRAIL ADVENTURES

REGISTRATION OPENING IN
FEBRUARY, 2026!





Looking Back to Look Forward: Preparing for Hike the Hill 2026

By Claire Cutler, CDTC Trail Policy Specialist

As we approach the end of 2025, CDTC’s policy team is turning our attention to preparing for Hike the Hill 2026, when CDTC staff members will head to Washington DC for a week of advocating for the CDT, trails, and public lands and communities along the Divide. During Hike the Hill 2025, we met with nineteen congressional offices, representing all five CDT states and both major political parties.

2025 has been a year marked by changes, challenges, and opportunities for public lands.

Over the last year, the workforce at land management agencies has experienced enormous turbulence and

significant cuts. Between January and June of 2025, the National Park Service lost approximately a quarter of its permanent workforce. The US Forest Service lost no less than 4,000 employees, with another massive “reduction in force” expected in the coming months. This was the loss of dedicated civil servants who built and maintained the CDT and connecting trails, fought wildfires, issued permits, conducted search and rescue missions, shared information with visitors, and so much more. AmeriCorps programs, a critical gateway for young people looking to enter the civil service or and the natural resources workforce, have faced significant disruption.

The US Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management are facing significant funding cuts. The administration’s 2026 budget proposed to decrease funding for these agencies by more than a third of the previous year’s levels, despite 75% of all voters in eleven Western states opposing funding cuts for these agencies. The proposed cut to the National Park Service’s budget represented the largest in the agency’s over 100-year history. As visitation continues to grow to public lands across the country, federal agencies must consider how to care for ecosystems and keep visitors safe with scarce resources.

Across the country, nonprofit organizations and communities are grappling with how to respond to attempts to undermine hard-won environmental laws. Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act was upended, limiting input from local voices in the management of public lands. The US Forest Service is also in the process of revoking the overwhelmingly supported 2001 Roadless Rule.

And, perhaps most visibly, public lands drew widespread national attention in June when a group of Senators and Representatives attempted to include

widespread, indiscriminate sale of public lands in the budget reconciliation process. **In the face of this threat, we saw champions arise for public lands from all corners of the country and, in Congress, from both sides of the aisle. We saw solidarity.**

The Surge of Bipartisan Support for Public Lands

Americans from across the country spoke out in opposition to this proposal. Hikers, hunters, anglers, campers, and outdoor enthusiasts stood together against the privatization of public lands. Republicans and Democrats alike stood in firm opposition to the sale of public lands, eventually leading to the proposal’s removal from the reconciliation bill.

Many of these same elected officials joined the newly-formed Bipartisan Public Lands Caucus, a group of Representatives from both parties committed to protecting access, recreation, and preservation of public lands. In both chambers of Congress, elected officials have introduced bills that would make the CDT safer, more enjoyable, and more accessible. The Continental Divide Trail Completion Act was reintroduced in the House and the Senate, which would direct the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to complete the CDT within ten years of the bill’s enactment. In the Senate, the America the Beautiful Act was introduced, which would reauthorize the Legacy Restoration Fund, a lifeline of funding for overdue maintenance on public lands. Right now, this momentum in Congress and in

communities demonstrates widespread, resounding support for the continued protection of our public lands.

Preparing to Hike the Hill

As we prepare to head to Capitol Hill in early 2026, we’re ready to advocate for the CDT, public lands, and the communities that care for them. We’ll support strong funding and staffing at land management agencies, the CDT Completion Act and the America the Beautiful Act, and the needs of communities along the Divide.

Heading into the new year, we’re buoyed by strength and solidarity of the public land champions that surround us: each of the organizations working to protect treasured places and the land management agencies that steward them; the community members and small businesses that help folks enjoy natural places; and, above all, each of the outdoor enthusiasts that love these places. **As we prepare for Hike the Hill, we’ll ask our community to help us advocate for the CDT—I hope you’ll stay tuned and join us in speaking up for the trail.**



Visit the CDT Action Center

[LEARN MORE >](#)



MEDIA ROUNDUP

PLAYLIST | [THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE THE TERMINUS](#)

Pre-trail planning jitters keeping you up at night? Is the thought of launching into the unknown making you feel both terrified and excited? This is the playlist for you.

This isn't your average holiday season playlist. Inspired by the creativity work of [Rachel Burke](#), The Nightmare Before the Terminus playlist will prepare you for those long, crazy nights in the wilds, or bring you back to when you had your own journey on the trail. At the very least, this compilation might leave you feeling a little weird, but hopefully inspired to start your own crazy adventure.



Listen on Spotify



Art by Rachel Burke, [Madrean Designs](#).

BOOK | THE BOOK OF HOPE: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR TRYING TIMES

By Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams

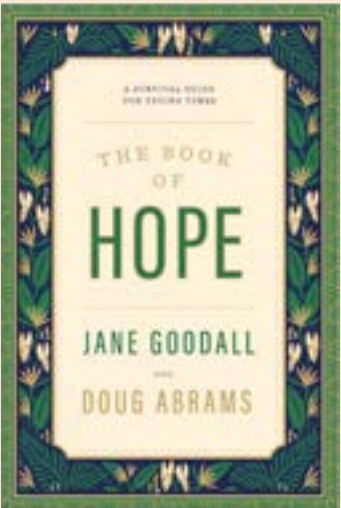
Dr. Jane Goodall's most recent book, The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times, is not only a celebration and description of the legendary conservationist's legacy, but also a reminder of the timelessness of her teachings on how to find, preserve, and cultivate hope.

In The Book of Hope, Douglas Abrams speaks with Goodall about pivotal moments in her life and career. Abrams weaves anecdotes about conservation and social justice efforts around the world into Goodall's description of her four reasons for hope: the amazing human intellect, the resilience of nature, the power of young people, and the indomitable human spirit. Written in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the book is a reminder of the reasons for optimism and action, even in the face of dark times.



Five years later and set against the backdrop of deep American political turmoil, the book's message holds strong. It is a reminder that, as Goodall says, "Hope is not an expression of the facts alone. Hope is how we create new facts."

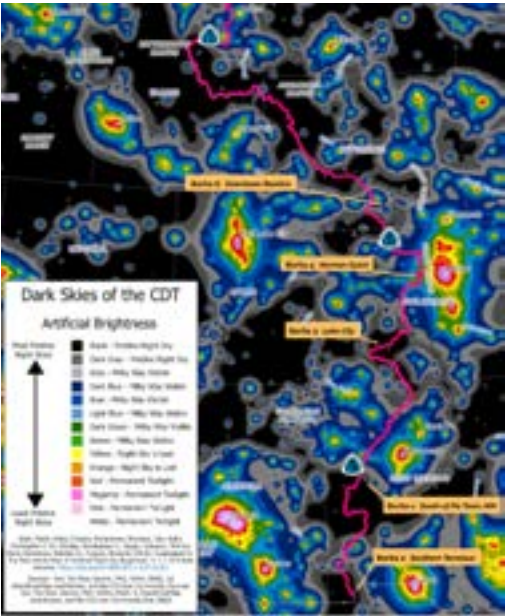
- Claire Cutler, CDTC Trail Policy Specialist



NEW | DARK SKY GUIDE TO THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL

CDTC has long known that the CDT is a gateway to rural communities, to diverse landscapes, to protected ecosystems, and to so much more. In 2025, CDTC began to explore the CDT as a gateway to some of the most pristine night skies in the continental United States.

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE GUIDE >>



CDT SUPPORTERS

Members are the core of our organization and its efforts to protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. By being a member, you support the protection of the CDT and our work to build a broad-based community of people who love and support the Trail. Thank you!

CHARTER MEMBERS

CDTC Charter Members helped build the base of support necessary to help launch CDTC’s efforts in 2012. CDTC owes an incredible debt of gratitude to these important supporters.

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CDT Explorers support CDTC with donations of \$1000 or more. We wish to thank the following individuals for their generous donations between March 1 and October 15, 2025.

\$100-\$499

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OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BOOTHEEL

AND THE SOUTHERN TERMINUS OF COLORADO

By Danny “Slapshot” Knoll
CDTC Trail Information Manager

I first visited the southern terminus at Crazy Cook to begin a four-month thru-hike of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) in 2016, and it was unlike any place I had backpacked in before. This area of southern New Mexico is known as the Bootheel because the border resembles the heel of a boot when viewed on a map. It is remote, devoid of natural water sources, lacks trees and shade, and is exposed to the elements. It is a landscape I would not have sought out if not for the CDT.

Fast forward to today—I am preparing for my fourth season coordinating the shuttle with CDTC, a service that the organization launched in 2014 to help hikers access the hard-to-get-to terminus. While sometimes harsh, I have grown to love and appreciate the Bootheel for its hidden beauty, solitude, stillness, night sky, wildlife, and the resilient people that call the Bootheel home.

Over the course of my short tenure in this role, I have met hundreds of hikers. Many were experiencing this section for the first time, just as I did in 2016. Below are some of my observations from the Heel.

The Bootheel is becoming more popular

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there has been a steady uptick of hikers accessing the

Bootheel each year. This past spring, we received 434 registrations from individuals starting their journeys at the southern terminus. Many are thru-hikers, but we are also beginning to see an increase in section hikers. Roughly one-fourth of all registered hikers beginning at Crazy Cook were section hikers. We expect an additional 150 hikers to access the southern terminus in the fall.

Surprises

The Chihuahuan Desert can catch even the most seasoned hikers off guard. Here are some common surprises hikers face when backpacking in the Bootheel for the first time.

Heat — The desert is hot. While this may be common knowledge, it remains the most frequent reason hikers struggle in the Bootheel. Dehydration, sunburn, and blisters are commonplace, especially during the spring hiking season. There are no reliable natural water sources south of Lordsburg. Furthermore, shade is only found if you know where to look or make your own. Hikers rely on water cache boxes and a few cattle wells scattered throughout the area to stay hydrated.

Wind — Wind-blown dust storms known as *haboobs* are an occasional hazard hikers need to be mindful of. These storms blow large dust plumes, sometimes miles wide, that limit visibility and even shut down the interstate. Hiking in these conditions is challenging and can be dangerous. Many hikers keep a watchful eye on the weather forecast and bail into town during haboobs when possible. The Hachita Community Center is a popular safe place for hikers to escape such conditions.

Rough Access Road — The 22-mile dirt road, known as Commodore Rd, from Highway 81 to the southern terminus, is unmaintained and in especially bad shape from recent flash floods. **We often help drivers who either break down or get stuck because they are unaware of the road conditions.** Occasionally, travelers find themselves lost in the middle of a private ranch or behind a locked gate because the directions to Crazy Cook are incorrect on Google Maps. One can always contact CDTC for current road conditions and directions.

National Defense Area — Perhaps the biggest recent surprise has been the establishment of the New Mexico National Defense Area (NDA). This includes the southernmost 1.1 miles of the CDT and the southern terminus monument, which now require clearance

to access. The good news is, most hikers who have applied were granted clearance rather easily. The bad news is, not everyone is eligible for clearance. CDTC continues to look into options that make the southern terminus accessible to all.

A Final Word

Despite the challenges inherent to the Bootheel—from exposure to the elements to the logistical hurdles of road access and the new NDA requirements—my appreciation for this unique landscape and its resilient communities only deepens with each season.

The steady growth in the number of hikers is a testament to the allure of the CDT in southern New Mexico, and I feel fortunate to be a part of it.

What People Forget To Pack

Arriving at the southern terminus monument is a special moment. It's also a common time that people realize they forgot something. These are some of the most frequently forgotten items.



Water — It may be hard to believe, but **the most forgotten item is water.** Be prepared for long water carries. Water is likely the heaviest item in one's pack and is the most important. Don't forget to bring water and bring lots of it. Each year, Border Patrol rescues a handful of hikers because they run out of water.



Offline Maps — Most CDT hikers now use a smartphone for navigation. Occasionally, we drop someone off only to discover they forgot to download the maps directly to their device for offline use. **There is no cell reception in this area,** so it is critical, whichever navigation app one utilizes, to know how to use it when not connected to the internet.



Battery Power — Outside of injuries, the most common reason hikers are forced off trail is because their phones die. Most CDT hikers rely solely on their phones for navigation, which leaves them in a difficult spot if they do not have extra battery power. Portable battery banks are a popular strategy to extend phone life; however, I encourage everyone to **consider also carrying the navigation tool that doesn't require power**—a paper map and compass.



Fuel — Isobutane canister fuel is popular among backpackers for cooking. It's also prohibited to carry on airplanes. Many CDT-goers utilize air travel as one leg of the journey to Lordsburg, which leads to the item being forgotten. CDTC now carries canisters just in case people forget or the local stores are out of stock.



A hiker taking their first steps on the CDT heading west



Giving an orientation to a group of excited CDT hopefuls on the water cache boxes



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