

# Passages

Continental Divide Trail Coalition | Volume 35, Winter 2025

**Audio Articles** 

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in audio!



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to  
**complete  
and protect**  
the  
Continental  
Divide Trail.



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PASSAGES | A publication of the  
Continental Divide Trail Coalition

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# Passages

Volume 35, Winter 2025

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

## 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](http://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](mailto:communications@cdtcoalition.org). For more information about support for Passages, please contact [development@cdtcoalition.org](mailto:development@cdtcoalition.org).

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Photo Credit: Jess Cody

## 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.



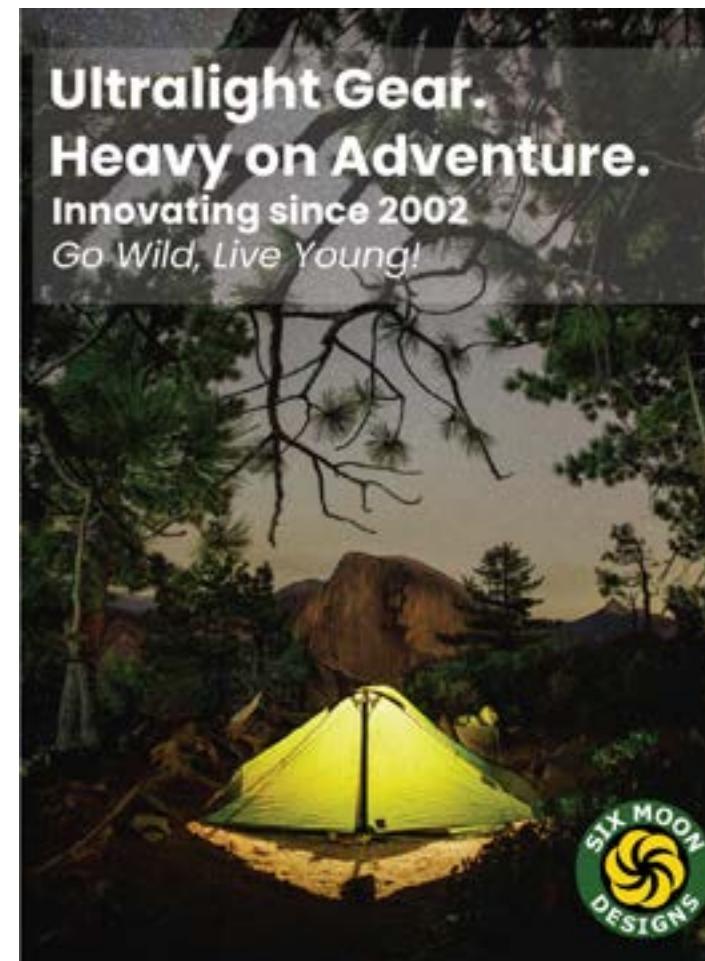
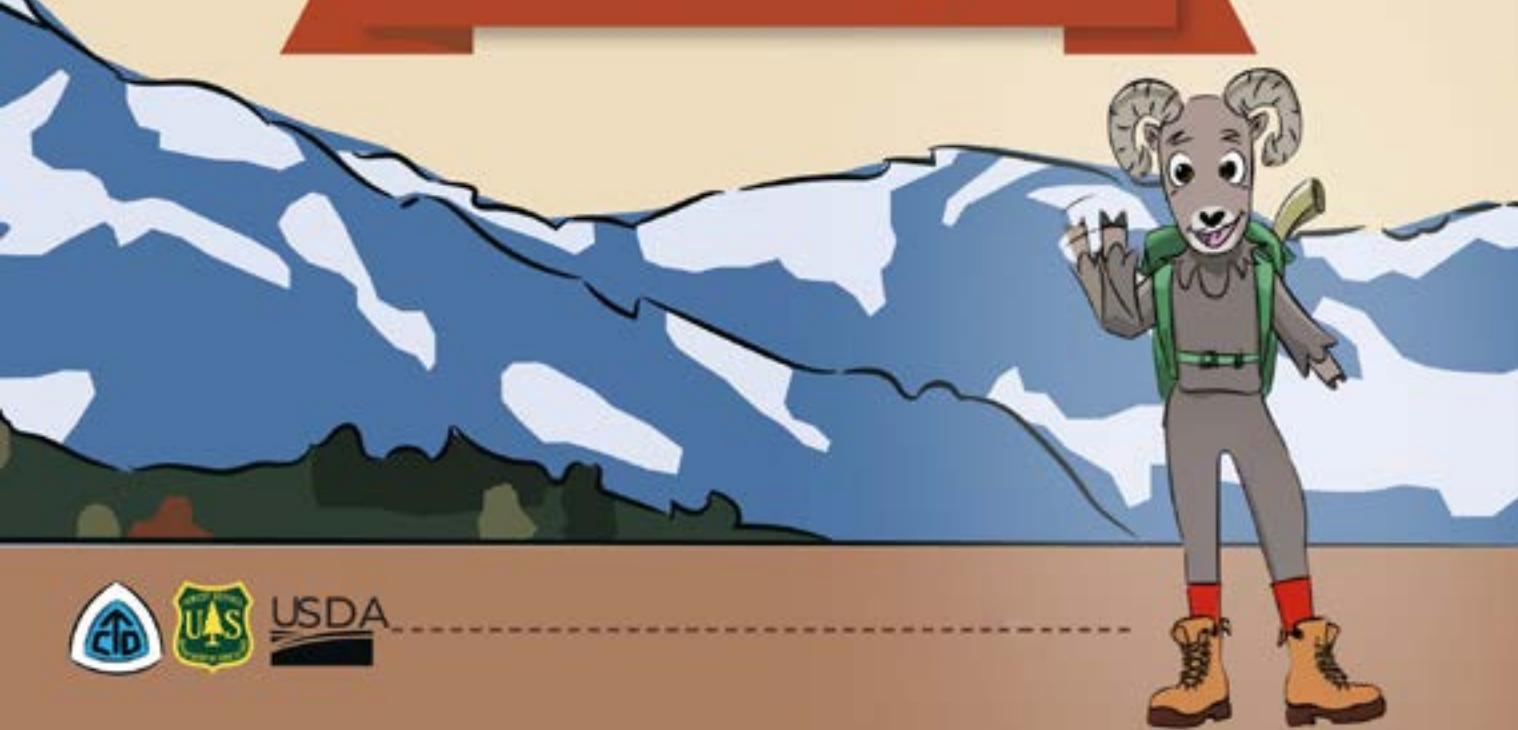
Savoring the benefits of crew chef training at Ghost Ranch, NM.



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

# Explore the CDT

Download the Jr. Ranger Book!



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 throughway 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,



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

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*



Hopewell Lake kiosk panel.

In most places, if not all, people are simply visiting—passing through. What began as a solo journey on the CDT for Joe has turned into community conversations and a space to bridge a love of landscape across cultures. Now, the kiosks across the Carson National Forest serve as a testament to the life and passion of one special hiker. But they also stand as a reminder that the landscape holds a richness that is far beyond what might be obvious.

While the pain of Joe's loss will never be forgotten, the eight kiosks across northern New Mexico now stand as a reminder that even those just briefly passing through can have a profound impact and leave a lasting legacy. Even more, Joe's legacy kiosks have served as a launch point for CDTC to embrace and mobilize this new model of information sharing along the entire CDT corridor.

# Hopewell Lake Trailhead

## Connections with the Land

Winterbear Swan, "Four Elements",  
Taos Pueblo

Leonard Archuleta, Taos Pueblo

**Welcome to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT)** and the Carson National Forest. These are the homelands and waters of Indigenous People, Tribal Nations, and Traditional Hispanic communities who remain stewards and maintain deep connections to these places through their traditional, cultural, and religious practices. While visiting these sacred lands and waters it is important to recognize the original stewards of these places and to honor and acknowledge their efforts in nurturing Mother Nature, past, present, and future.

Recognizing the waters, mountains and valleys is an invitation to express your gratitude and to honor the first people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. By recognizing these beginnings and the ongoing dedication and importance of these lands and waters, we all become a part of their living history, for time ever more.

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 for who call this place home. These are places that provide healing plants, cooking herbs, and for many, sustainability for all of life. As an important place of emergence, these lands provide water to people all across North America and remain an important migration corridor for Elk, Bear, Bobcat, Wild Turkey, and many other creatures big and small. And, for time ever more, these lands and waters will continue to hold our collective history, traditions, and spiritual connections to the place we call home, our Mother Earth.

Through acknowledging our relationship to these lands, and all of the lands around us, we hope for a future with more understanding and knowledge of the places, people, communities, and cultures the Trail connects and brings together. We deepen our connection to the land as we seek to understand our place in its history. Enjoy your visit and please remember to leave only footprints and take only Mother Nature's Gifts and Blessings.

Message shared by the Community of Taos Pueblo

Jenna Bass, "Sacred Waters", Taos Pueblo

## HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

### ¿CÓMO ME HAGO VOLUNTARIO?

If you would like to volunteer with us, please fill out the form linked via the QR code below with your name, where you live, and what types of volunteer opportunities interest you most. We'll do our best to find the right volunteer job for you.

Si deseas ser voluntario con nosotros, complete el formulario vinculado mediante el código QR a continuación con su nombre, dónde vive y qué tipos de oportunidades de voluntariado le interesan más. Haremos todo lo posible para encontrar el trabajo voluntario adecuado para usted.

## LEAVE NO TRACE

### (NO DEJAR RASTRO)

**Take Nothing, But Pictures and Leave Nothing But Footprints  
(No te lleves nada, pero las fotografías no dejan más que huellas)**

**Principles of Leave No Trace**

**(NO DEJAR RASTRO 7 PRINCIPIOS)**

**Plan Ahead and Prepare  
(Pantos con Anticipación y Preparación)**

**Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces  
(Viaja y Acampa en Superficies Resistentes)**

**Dispose of Waste Properly  
(Deshazte de los Residuos Adecuadamente)**

**Leave What You Find  
(Mantén lo que Encuentras)**

**Minimize Impact  
(Mínime el Impacto de Los Fugazos)**

**Share the Trail  
(Sé Considerado Con Otras Visitantes)**

**DO YOUR PART  
(HAZ TU PARTE)  
PROTECT OUR PLANET  
(PROTEGER NUESTRO PLANETA)**

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### SAFETY

- Let someone know where you plan on going and when specific details (return time, etc.).
- Always wear a helmet and use proper technique when riding.
- Never ride alone. Ride with a group.
- It is a high-use area, can protect to a more advanced, but with wide open, sunburns, and sun protection.
- There may be rains, snow, thunder, lightning, and scratches at any time during the year. Practice proper safety measures.
- Particular hazardous weather associated with the monsoon season generally occurs in July and August.
- Be aware of weather hazards in the winter and early spring.

### WILDLIFE AWARENESS

- Be bear aware! Never approach or pet bears.
- If a bear or moose has you spotted, move a wide detour or leave the area.
- Do not feed or tease food to any animal.
- Do not approach or feed deer, moose, elk, or other animals for safety.
- Areas with elk include elk sign, elk, moose, elk, fox, coyote, and mountain lion.

### RESPECT OTHER USERS

- Do not stand under trail signs, either flooded or under voice command.
- Do not stand under trail signs, either flooded or under voice command.
- Do not stand under trail signs, either flooded or under voice command.
- The consequences about using outdoor speakers or events for music, podcasts, etc.

## About the Continental Divide

The **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT)** follows the backbone of the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico for 3,100 miles. It travels through 20 National Forests, 4 National Parks, and 13 BLM Resource Areas, Tribal and State Lands. The CDT is more than a trail; it is a place where diverse cultures and communities connect, cultures, and traditions along the major watershed of the North American Continent. The CDT and its corridor also ensure intimate connections to one of the most important landscapes of our entire planet, which exists for all generations to experience today and tomorrow.

On the **Carson National Forest**, the CDT winds its way 103 miles between the New Mexico/Colorado border and the Rio Chama. Along the way, visitors will pass through the beautiful Chama River Canyon Wilderness, and then the trail makes its way through Martinez Canyon, climbs up to Ganlon Lakes campground, and on to Hopewell Lake campground. North of Llagunas campground, the trail ascends to the Braxos Ridge, with a view of the Cruces Bald Wilderness, before making its way to the NM/CO border.

Congress established the CDT in 1978 to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking, and horseback riding opportunities, while also conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources along the CDT corridor. These uses persist today and are now joined by a growing diversity of recreationists, including mountain bikers, cross-country skiers, long-distance runners, hikers, anglers, bird watchers, and many more types of nature lovers.

The CDT navigates dramatically between mountain ranges and high-desert surroundings. It is one of the most renowned trails in the United States, because of its scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, elevation gains, and primitive qualities. The Continental Divide Trail is cooperatively stewarded by agencies, the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, Tribal Nations, volunteer organizations, and your conservation efforts to support trail maintenance needs. Whether you're a long-distance hiker or equestrian rider, an overnight backpacker, or just out for a short stretch, the Carson section of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail offers an opportunity to connect to the land in an intimate way and forever be a part of its history, as much as it becomes a part of yours.

**Land Acknowledgement:** We offer our gratitude and appreciation to those whose homelands we are working on. The lands and waters we are on are the homelands of many Indigenous Peoples. These lands have been here long before we arrived. Indigenous and Traditional communities have stewarded this land for many generations and continue to protect and remain in relationship with these lands and will do so until the end of time. Please honor these beginnings and recognize the ongoing dedication and importance of these connections to the land that the CDT traverses.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is a living tapestry woven from the stories of the people connected to this place, from the beginning of time until today. We hope that as you learn more about the lands along the continental divide and the people connected to its past, you become part of its future.

To learn more about the cultures, communities, and connections that contributed to the creation of this kiosk, follow this QR code.

Photo Credit: Joe Schuler

**Carson National Forest**

Support for this kiosk was generously provided by the Joe Schuler Memorial Fund to celebrate the biodiversity and appreciation of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail in New Mexico.



The Continental Divide Trail Coalition is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting, completing, and elevating the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.



Learn more at  
[cdtcoalition.org](http://cdtcoalition.org)

# CONNECTION TO THE LAND

# NATIVE VOICES FILM SERIES: TAOS PUEBLO

**“These mountains that are behind me...this is where our ancestors walked--all the trails here.”**

- Mary Alice Martin

Episode 2 of Native Voices centers Taos Pueblo through the perspectives of three Tribal Elders, whose voices guide the episode's reflections on land, water, and culture.

Produced in partnership with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition and directed by UNM-Taos FDMA alumni, the episode explores storytelling as a living practice — rooted in responsibility, relationship, and lived experience. Through reflection, conversation, and creative expression, the film highlights the strengths, impacts, and ongoing presence of Taos Pueblo voices, emphasizing storytelling as both cultural continuity and a pathway for emerging Indigenous filmmakers to shape their own narratives.

NOW STREAMING



Rio Grande, Tao  
Karaseva, Unsplash



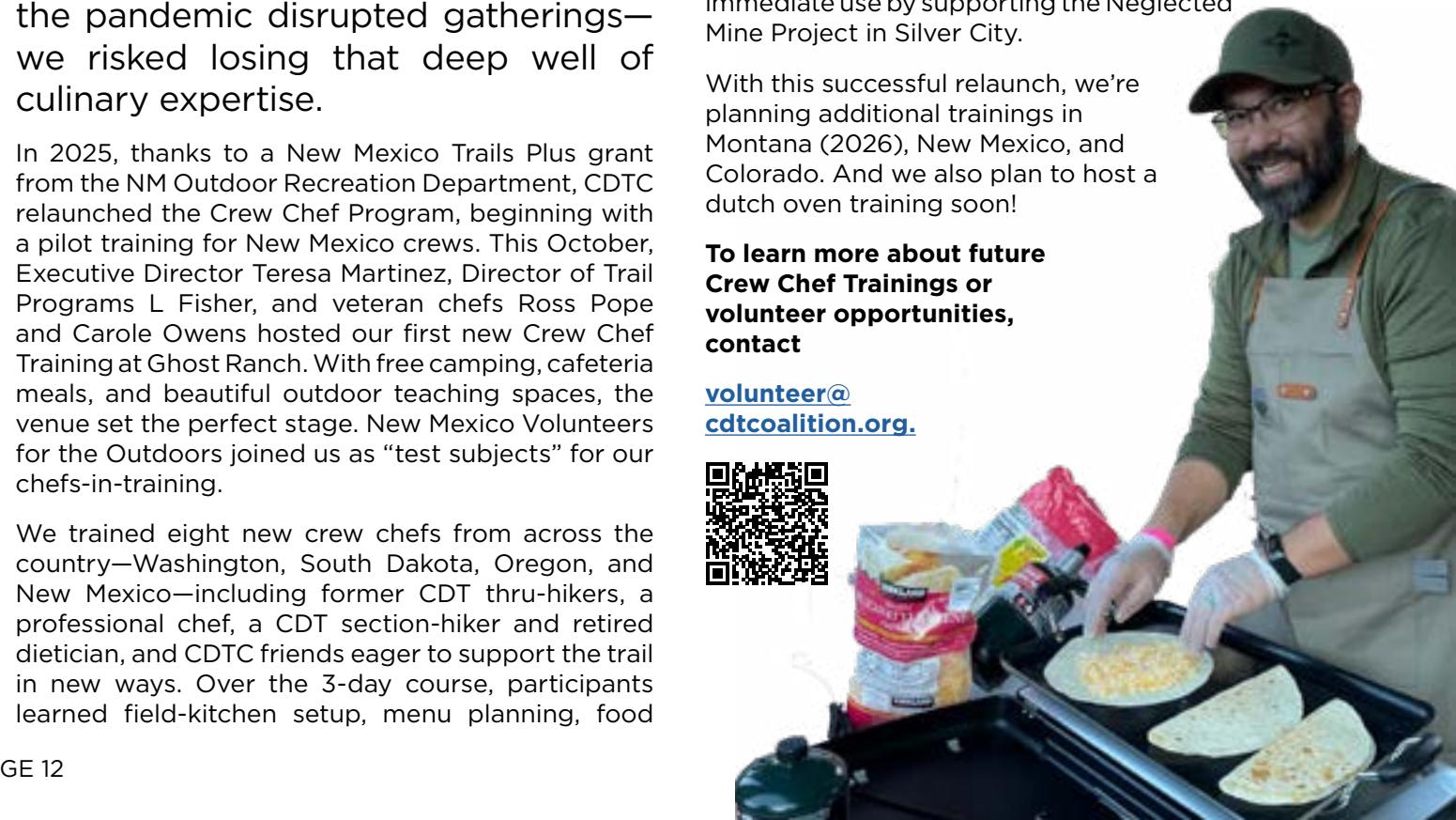
# FUELING THE WORK CREATING A NEW GENERATION OF CREW CHEFS

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 dietitian, 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!

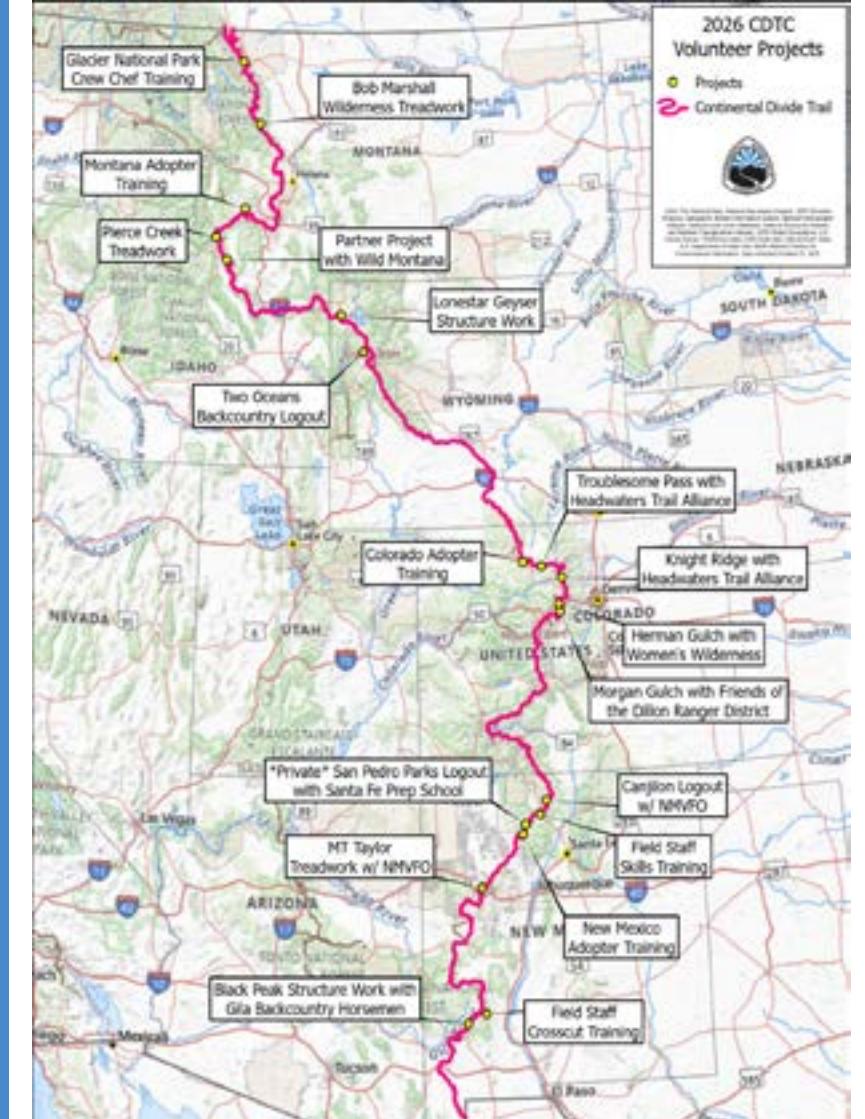
CDTC and partners are gearing up for the largest stewardship season in the CDT's history—52 trail projects planned to protect, complete, and maintain the trail.

### 20 Professional GAOA Trail Crew Projects

### 17 Volunteer Trail Projects

### 15 Community Stewardship Projects

Join our mailing list for the latest updates!



**2026 TRAIL  
ADVENTURES**  
REGISTRATION OPENING IN  
FEBRUARY, 2026!

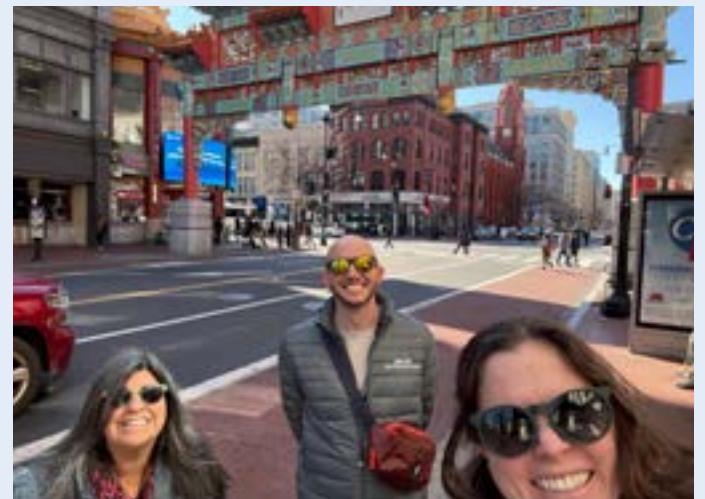
# Looking Back to Look Forward: Preparing for Hike the Hill 2026

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 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 >](#)

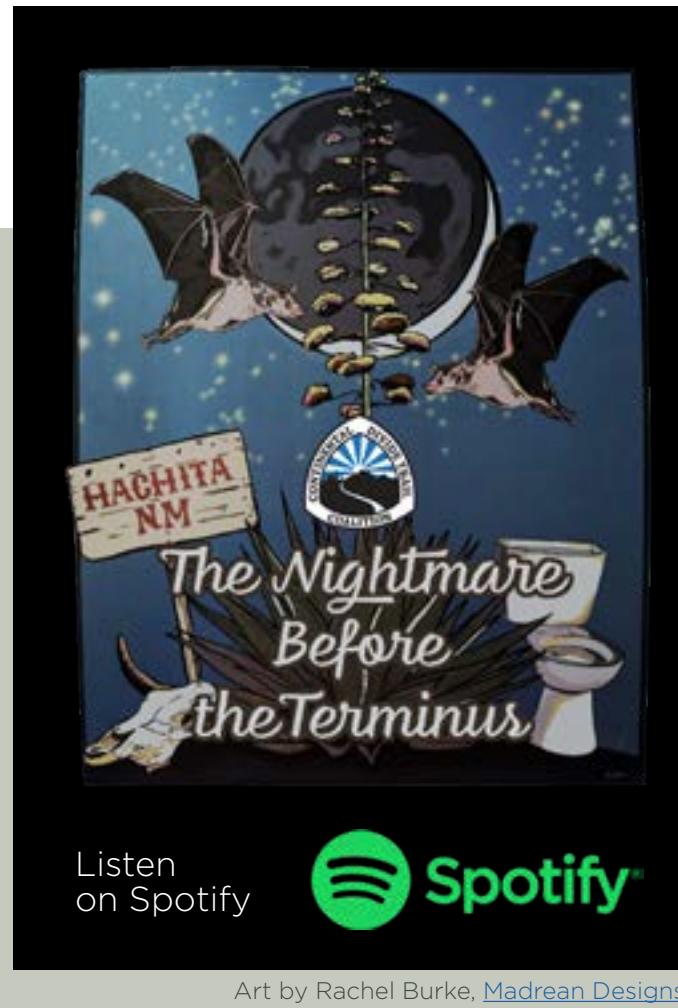


# MEDIA ROUNDUP

## 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 journeys 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.

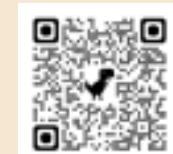
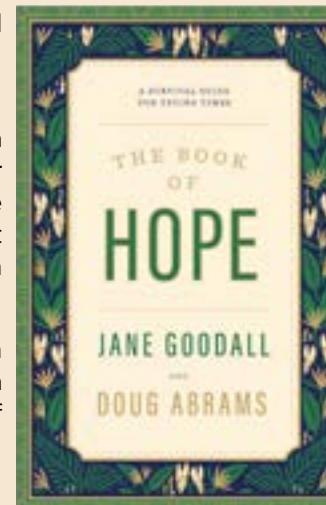


# BOOK | THE BOOK OF HOPE: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR TRYING TIMES

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



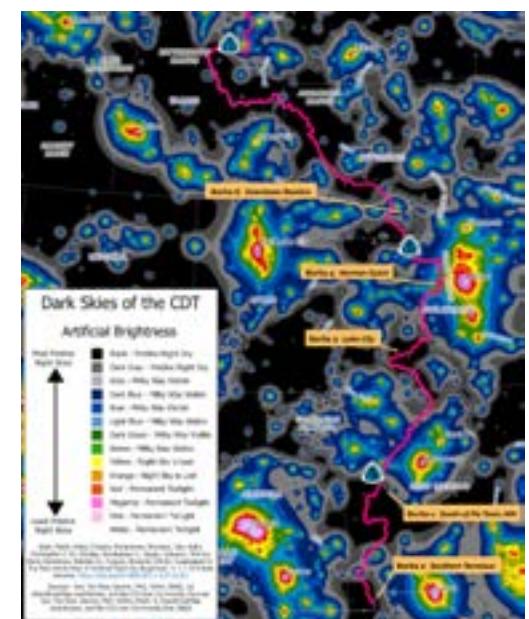
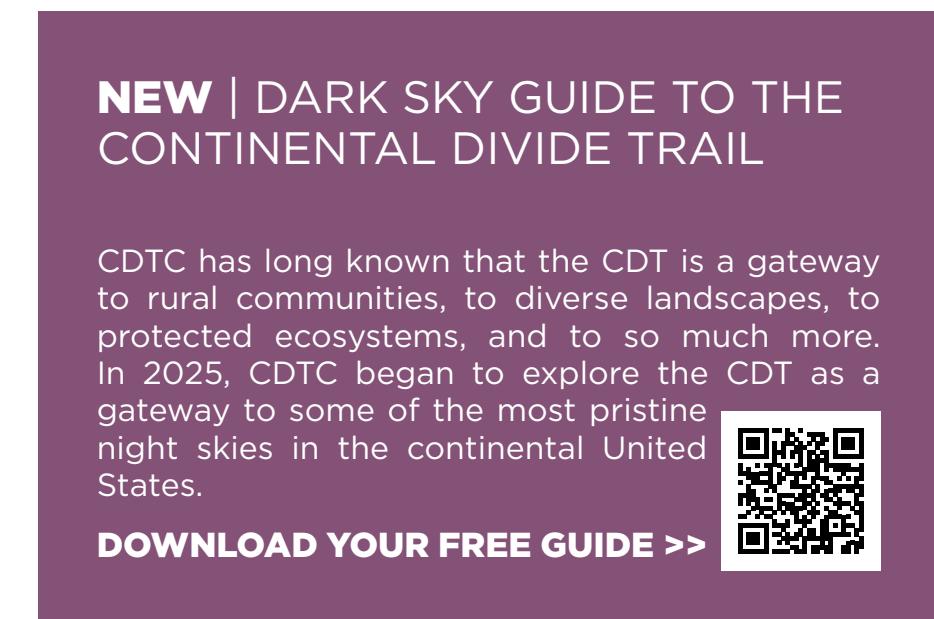
# DARK SKIES

## EXPLORING THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL

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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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