

OPEN SPACE newsletter



A Quarterly Newsletter of the Open Space Division and the Open Space Alliance

Volume 5, Issue 3, October - December 2004

Parks and Recreation Department Celebrates 50 Years of Service

For fifty years Albuquerque's Parks and Recreation Department has flourished. As the sleepy little town of 50,000 residents of the 1940's doubled its size by the early 1950's, the need for leadership to direct the growth of our parks was apparent. Under the five member City Commission, several community organizations petitioned for a government entity to direct the future of the boomtown's green space. Prior to this, the Public Works Department had overseen the 30 existing parks. In 1954, the Parks and Recreation department was officially organized. Serving as director from 1954 until 1978 was Robert "Bob" Burgan. The 1955 Park Dedication Ordinance was one of his first orders of business. Simply stated, it required any local homebuilder to "give" or dedicate land to the city for each new subdivision built. The result was an ever-increasing number of neighborhood parks.

Mr. Burgan's direction was prolific, spanning 24 years. In 1959 the first public swimming pool was built. The community center division grew and tennis courts and playgrounds soon followed in every quadrant of the city. Other directors have been Orly Sedillo, Mike Walker, Jay Czar (also former Chief Administrative Officer), Vern Barela, Donald Jordan, Pleas Glen, Blanca B. Hise and our current director, Jay Hart. "For over fifty-years, the department's greatness has been to provide

recreation, beautiful park settings and natural open spaces for it's citizens", said Hart.

Today, the Parks and Recreation Department has many jewels in its crown. Numerous bike paths course throughout the city. Adults can play a variety of league sports or opt for "Tennis anyone?" on 136 courts. Playgrounds have been added and updated to include modern, safe, fun stuff for kids. Folks in the Open Space Division will tell you "there's no better place than Open Space" which can be measured by the 30,000 acres in the metropolitan area that they manage. "Swimming is a year-round activity" occurring at one of the five year-round pools or in the summer at seven outdoor pools. Outdoor Recreation proves that "without recreation, weekends would be weekdays" by offering kayaking, snorkeling, camping and a skate park. There are four public golf courses open 364 days a year, reminding players that Albuquerque is the place "where it takes less green to get on the green." And without a doubt, the Balloon Fiesta Park, which hosts the world famous Balloon Fiesta, is a unique, world-class amenity that is visited and enjoyed by millions of people annually.

Congratulations to the Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department celebrating fifty years of service to our community. A Golden Jubilee Anniversary for a commitment to improving the quality of life of our citizens.

.....
: A **BIG** *thank you* to all the volunteers who shamelessly wore
: their orange safety vests and patrolled the bosque during closure.
: With your presence and tips to the Open Space Police the
: bosque escaped another devastating fire.
:

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

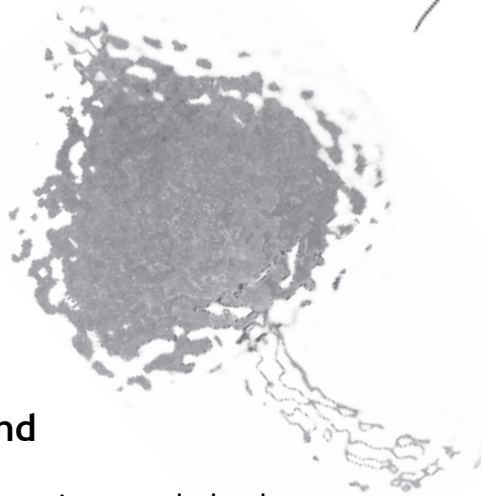


Martin J. Chavez, Mayor

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Jay Hart, former superintendent of the Open Space Division, to director of the Parks and Recreation Department. Blanca B. Hise has moved to the vacated director position at the Department of Senior Affairs.

Jay Hart has many accomplishments over his 25 years of service to the City of Albuquerque, bringing an impressive amount of experience and skills in parks and natural resource management. Among his achievements, he has contributed to one of the most successful Open Space programs in the country, administered the restoration of our local bosque and oversaw the acquisition of approximately 18,000 acres of Major Public Open Space including Elena Gallegos Land Grant, Anderson Fields (Los Poblanos Fields), and portions of Rio Grande Valley State Park and Petroglyph National Monument.

I believe Jay is a great choice for the director position and I look forward to his continued success with the City.



An Editor Apology...

No, you haven't been deleted from the newsletter mailing list. And no, the postal service can't be blamed for your missing 3rd quarter newsletter. The fact is there was not a 3rd quarter newsletter produced. My apologies as I know many of you look forward to the Open Space News for information on our activities and events. Production of the newsletter will soon be managed by the Open Space Alliance an editorial board. Look for a new face coming soon on and in the Open Space News.

JLH

Hidden Wonderland

Hidden in our Bosque there is a wonderland
Enchantment buried in dead wood and it is really grand
Now that we are cleaning it, beauty for all to see
Making all the Bosque trails glow in symmetry

Mulching all the underbrush great food for Cottonwood trees
Tearing out the foreign stuff our greenery to please
Now seeing our hidden jewel the people they will come
Idling through the gracious trees enjoying warmth and sun

The animals are smiling our trees are full of cheer
Our Rio vale is coming back and it was ever near
So if upon your river walk, big equipment gets in your way
Give the driver's a hug, machines a cheer for making our Bosque's new day

-Peter Baston, TWV

City and Corps Partner Up to Protect the Bosque

Ondrea Hummel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Matt Schmader, Open Space Division

In the summer of 2003, two fires took place in the bosque in Albuquerque. The first fire took place on June 24, 2003 near the I-40 Bridge and burned approximately 150 acres. The second fire took place on June 26, 2003 near the Montano Bridge and burned approximately 113 acres. A total of approximately 263 acres of bosque land, including some private land, were lost (see Figure 1). Under Public Law 108-137, Operations and Maintenance, Section 116, "the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized to undertake appropriate planning, design and construction measures for wildfire prevention and restoration in the Middle Rio Grande bosque in and around the City of Albuquerque. Work shall be directed toward those portions of the bosque which have been damaged by wildfire or are in imminent danger of damage from wildfire due to heavy fuel loads and impediments to emergency vehicle access." This gave the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Albuquerque District, the authority to assist the City of Albuquerque (COA) and Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) with burn restoration and fire prevention. These efforts began early this year.

The plan for implementing this project is two-fold. First, the burn sites will be restored by removing jetty jacks and revegetating the area with native riparian species. This is currently underway, with the jacks at I-40 already removed by the Corps contractor, AJAC. Also, weather stations will be installed to help provide information regarding fuel moisture levels and other indicators regarding fire danger. Mile markers will be installed every ¼ mile along the levee to help identify 'where you are' in the bosque.

Another key portion of the project is fire prevention. The COA Open Space Division (OSD) and its contractors have been selectively thinning in the bosque throughout Albuquerque. This includes removal of non-native species and thinning of dead material. The Corps will then complete follow-up work in these areas by removing jetty jacks and debris piles where they exist and revegetating the areas with native grass, shrubs and trees.

At the same time, emergency access will be improved in key locations in order to allow agencies to better fight a fire if one occurs this summer. A number of temporary emergency drain crossings will be installed prior to the July 4 holiday. Also, levee roads will be improved where needed and turn-arounds will be constructed where they are not present.

Monitoring of these projects is also occurring. The Corps, in their joint efforts with OSD and MRGCD, has contracted with the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) to continue monitoring areas within the Albuquerque reach of the Rio Grande and one additional site will also be added near Central. The Corps is also completing Southwestern Willow Flycatcher surveys in relation to thinning work that they will complete in the fall of 2004 and 2005. A pilot study to look at indicator species (such as birds and/or insects) for measuring restoration success is also being implemented under the Corps Bosque Wildfire project.

The Corps will be issuing environmental documentation for public review throughout this project. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is currently under review (June 7 - June 22) for the emergency drain crossing and levee rehabilitation work. Another EA will be issued for the remaining work that will take place under this project. Check <http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/> and go to FONSI/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS for updates.

For more information on these efforts, contact Ondrea Hummel, Biologist at the Corps at 342-3375 or Matt Schmader, OSD Assistant Superintendent at 452-5200.

OCTOBER

- Ongoing **WEEKEND BIRD WALKS**
Rio Grande Nature Center
8:30 am
Free bird walks led by volunteer naturalists Saturdays and Sundays. Contact the Rio Grande Nature Center for more information at 344-7240.
- Ongoing **SUNDAY NATURE WALKS**
Rio Grande Nature Center
1:00 pm
Free nature walks led by volunteer naturalists on Sundays. Contact the Rio Grande Nature Center for more information at 344-7240.
- 2** **HERP DAY**
Rio Grande Nature Center
10:00 am
Members of the New Mexico Herpetological Society present native and exotic reptiles and amphibians along with tips on husbandry and care. This is a free event. Contact the Rio Grande Nature Center for more information at 344-7240.
- 9** **BOSQUE EDUCATION GUIDE TRAINING**
Rio Grande Nature Center
8:30 am - 4:00 pmd
All are welcome to attend this day-long review of the guide's information and activities for grades K-12. Subjects include water planning, botany, mitigation, and service learning. Participants receive the curriculum, bosque model, and classroom materials free. For information visit www.nmnaturalhistory.org or call the Rio Grande Nature Center at 344-7240.

Dia del Rio!

Saturday * October 16

8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Pueblo Montano

(SW corner of Montano
and the river)

Celebrate the life and spirit of the Rio Grande in solidarity with communities up and down the banks of this precious river.

This year's Dia del Rio will focus on restoration at a site devastated by the 2003 bosque fires. Projects will include planting, seeding and trail improvements in the new Pueblo Montano Parking Area.

To register as a volunteer for Dia del Rio, please call REI at 247-1191 or visit them at 1550 Mercantile Ave NE.

For information about this event, call the Open Space Division at 452-5200.



OCTOBER

23 MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY
Piedra Lisa Open Space
8:00 am
 Participate in this national day of volunteering in Open Space! The adoptors of Piedra Lisa, The Robert F. Nicodemus Wilderness Project, spearhead this event and look forward to your help on conservation projects such as trash clean up and trail work. For more information, contact Jim Sattler at 452-5200.

20 OPEN SPACE ALLIANCE MEETING
Open Space Visitor Center
4 pm - 6 pm
 The Open Space Alliance is friends group supporting Open Space Division education and conservation. The public is welcome. Call 452-5200 for more information.


(...There are no November or December projects, programs or events scheduled at this time...)

FARM HANDS WANTED

Rio Grande Community Farms (RGCF) is a non-profit organization farming a portion of Los Poblanos Fields toward sustainable urban agriculture. *Volunteer opportunities abound on these fertile fields!* If you like getting busy with earthworms, enjoy the rough massage of earth beneath your fingernails, or can't imagine anything better than the fragrance of, umm, fertilizer, then contact RGCF to find out how you can help on the farm. Projects include:

- * Maintain hedgerow (weed, prune and plant)
- * Fence maintenance
- * Mulch paths
- * Assist with volunteer groups (local and national)
- * Help plant food security crops (RGCF donates food to non-profit organizations like 'Mujeres en Accion', food banks, and churches)

Please contact Susan Turner, RGCF Service Coordinator, at 243-0749 or visit www.riograndefarms.com



7th Annual Maize Maze

**CRITTERS
IN THE CORN**

**Los Poblanos Fields Open Space
through October 30th**

**Saturdays & Sundays
11:00 am - 6:00 pm**

AND

MOONLIGHT MAZE

**October 29 & 30
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm**

This year's coyote-theme maze covers several acres. The miles of paths are carefully cut through rows of corn and millet that will serve as wildlife feed after the maze is over. Solving the maze is a fun, interactive family or group activity. The journey takes between 45 minutes to one hour.

Admission to the maze is \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 children 5-12 years old. Proceeds benefit Rio Grande Community Farms, the non-profit organization jointly managing the farm with the Open Space Division.

For more information, call the Community Farm at 345-4580 or visit www.riograndefarm.org.

Hot Spots To Watch

Here are a few spots to keep your eyes on where we've had recent problems:

South Foothills

Copper/U Mound area: Graffiti in parking area, on rock outcroppings in the National Forest and on street signs in the neighborhood. Damage and removal of trails signs and posts. Several sightings of possible campers within Open Space towards I-40.

Foothills

Embudo Canyon: Illegal dumping of landscape debris in parking area. Several sightings of possible campers within Open Space in the vicinity of Embudo Canyon.

Piedra Lisa Area: Graffiti on rock outcroppings and removal of trail signs.

Bosque: Graffiti beneath bridges.

Vehicle Break-ins: Vehicle break-ins could occur in any location. Remember to take your valuables with you or leave them at home. Be on the alert for suspicious subjects lingering in the parking areas.

SAFETY FIRST!

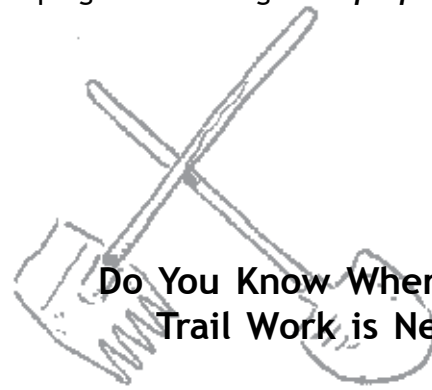
Your safety is the most important factor, so please **DO NOT** approach suspicious subjects. Please report unusual or suspicious behavior to the Open Space Dispatch at 452-5206 and let the Open Space Police handle the situation. Try to get as much information as possible including:

- Physical description of people involved (gender, age, clothing, hair color, distinguishing characteristics)
- Vehicle description (license plate number, color, make, model, year)
- Description of activities

Remember, contact Open Space first and do not take matters into your own hands.

Open Space Police Action Based on Your Tips

Thanks to your tips the Open Space police have been able to apprehend several subjects suspected of being involved in numerous auto break-ins in the Foothills and other parts of Albuquerque. Other tips have led to several campers on Open Space in the Foothills who have been issued citations for illegal camping and littering. **Keep up the good work!**



Do You Know Where Bosque Trail Work is Needed?

Bosque restoration efforts currently underway will have a positive impact on the health of the habitat and the safety of the Albuquerque community by reducing the occurrence of fire, reducing water use by exotic species and increasing the diversity of native plants.

However, the changes to the forest may be hard to get used to. Rest assured that although the face of the bosque seems a bit bruised right now, it will recover in all its natural beauty quickly.

You may not be able to forgive, though, the fact that your favorite trail has been carpeted with mulch. The mulch makes riding a bicycle, walking and riding a horse difficult. We are trying to address this problem quickly, but with your help your favorite trail could be put at the top of the list to be cleaned up!

If you are able to organize a group to clear a bosque trail, please call Jodi Hedderig at 452-5210 to schedule a project. We will provide the tools and leadership, you provide the people. I look forward to hearing from you!

A Place for Paintball In Open Space

Have you ever been hiking and come upon jawbreaker-sized balls in colors of bright blue, yellow, orange or red? Or maybe you saw splatters of color on trees, rocks or signs. These are the mark of paintballers. Players carry special guns loaded with the paintballs, or pods, and hunt other players. If a player is hit with the colorful splatter they are “dead.”

The paintballs are water soluble, but they leave an ugly mark in our open spaces until the next uncertain rain. Additionally, paintball rifles, which are CO₂ powered, are not allowed on Open Space managed lands. At least *most* Open Space managed lands, because now there is one place they can go -- Shooting Range Park.

A new addition was recently completed at the City managed Shooting Range Park, located west of the volcanoes off Paseo del Vulcan. A gallery especially for paintball enthusiasts, “Paintball Oasis,” offers weekend adventure for anyone who enjoys the sport.

The special facility is jointly managed by the City and Ill F/X Paintball store. Ill F/X sets up courses every Saturday and Sunday. The area is available by reservation Monday through Friday. Ill F/X also organizes and promotes special tournaments.

If you encounter people in Open Space looking to enjoy the sport, let them know there is a place they can go to legally enjoy the game. For more information on this new facility, contact Ill F/X Paintball at 266-2355.



Candelaria/Rio Grande Nature Center Trail Access Improvements Complete!

After about twelve years of planning, negotiating, taking neighborhood input, designing and redesigning, and finding and programming the money...

The Candelaria/Rio Grande Nature Center Bosque Access-point is completed! The trail improvements include: a much wider and therefore better-lit trail corridor; wood-shavings for a soft-surface edge; and a natural colored ADA-accessible trail surface. Open Space Division, with the help and design assistance of the Alvarado Gardens Neighborhood Association (AGNA) has developed an improved and roomier access-point for ALL our various user groups: pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, skaters, families pushing strollers, other wheel-users, and our friends and neighbors with mobility impairments.

Open Space Division is hoping to identify an ‘adoption’ group (hint, AGNA!) to hopefully install and maintain some landscaping and other improvements.

If you remember that bumpy, lumpy, soil-cement trail surface in that confined and narrow chain-link corridor, we think you’ll agree this is a dramatic improvement.

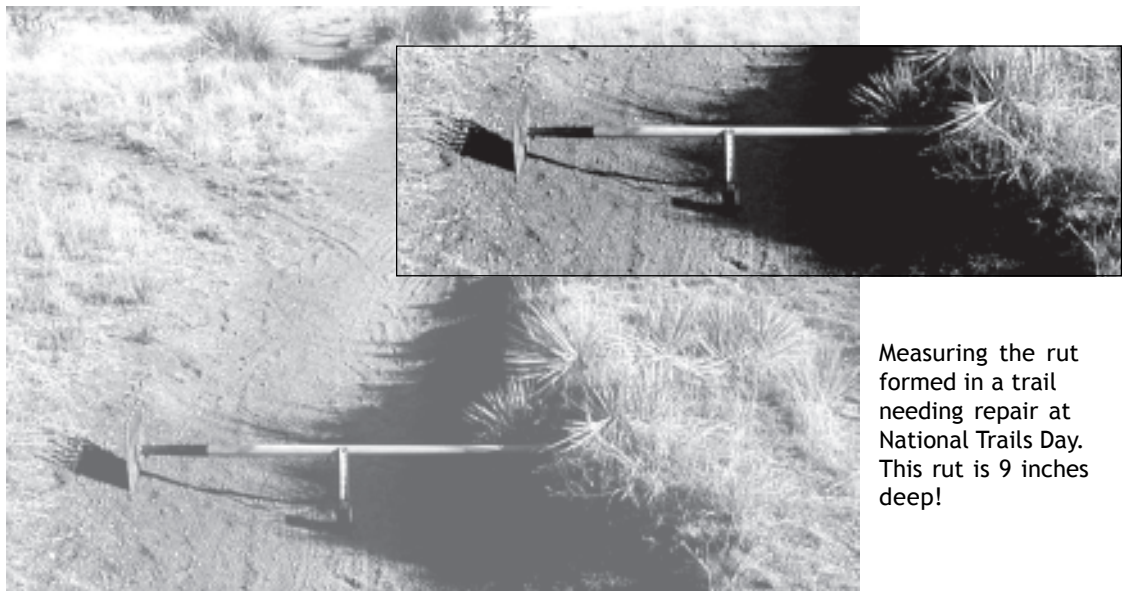
Contact Jodi Hedderig at 452.5200 for information about adopting this or any other Open Space area or facility.



National Trails Day 2004

A big thanks to everyone who helped out on National Trails Day! This year we had 156 volunteers participate in 6 Open Space projects and 5 Forest Service projects. A special thanks to the New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors (NMVFO) who help organize this event each year. Months of planning and coordination go into hosting this event, which involves everything from project planning to who's going to donate the bagels and coffee.

The NMVFO is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to helping public land management agencies around the state. They have been organizing groups of individuals to participate in projects that improve New Mexico's back country hiking, bicycling, and horse trails along with other outdoor public recreation areas since 1982. The NMVFO accom-



Measuring the rut formed in a trail needing repair at National Trails Day. This rut is 9 inches deep!

plishes approximately 30 projects each year around the state. This year the NMVFO will work on three Open Space projects. For more information on the NMVFO visit www.nmvfo.org or leave a message at 884-1991.

According to Bill Valasquez of the NMVFO, "Through volunteer trail maintenance, we can promote a nurturing relationship with the trails that will ensure that our grandchildren can enjoy the same recreational opportunities available to us. National Trails Day is an excellent opportunity for all trail users to join together and give something back to the fabulous trails we are lucky to enough to have in our own backyards!"

This year's sponsors included REI, Sportz Outdoor, Mountains and Rivers, Frito Lay, Great Harvest Bread Co., Einstein Bros. Bagels, Teva, Rock & Ice Magazine, Costco, Cascade Designs, Black Diamond, Nikwax, Kelty, and The North Face.

Thanks also to all the support the Open Space Division received from our adoption groups and Trail Watch Volunteers this year. Volunteers are an important part of our management program and we couldn't accomplish what we do without your help.

Spring Cleanup 2004

Thanks to everyone who participated in this years Spring Cleanup in the Foothills. Over 200 volunteers participated in 7 cleanups and rounded up 151 bags of trash, several tires, an oil drum, a car seat and a variety of rusty metal objects.

Volunteers came out even during rain and wind to help on our first two Saturdays. Crews consisted of Open Space volunteers, rock climbers, neighborhood associations, boy scouts, girl scouts and hikers and bikers who stopped to help.

Most of the trash collected this year consisted of broken glass sherds, a marked difference from years past where car parts and shot up appliances were common items. It takes a lot of patience and a lot of glass sherds to fill a trash bag. Most of the trash had accumulated before the Foothills were protected as Open Space. "I think we're getting on top of it", one volunteer said proudly.

Special Thanks to Stan Upchurch, the maker of the "Stan Hoe". This simple, but effective tool makes reaching into cacti for trash a painless task. Stan has donated several of his tools to the Open Space Division.



Get involved in the Open Space Alliance *today* and contribute to the future of YOUR Open Space!

The ***Open Space News*** is brought to you in part as a courtesy of the Open Space Alliance. The Alliance provides funding for printing and mailing costs. The Open Space Alliance also supports education programs such as the *Get on the Bus Scholarship*, volunteer programs such as *Community Interpreters of the Environment*, and projects such as *Dia del Rio*. If you are not a member of the Alliance, we invite you to join and help support the future of Open Space.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

NEW MEMBER

RENEWAL

\$10 STUDENT (18 & UNDER) / SENIOR

\$20 INDIVIDUAL

\$30 FAMILY

\$250 SUSTAINING

\$500 CORPORATE

\$1000 LIFE MEMBER

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: **Open Space Alliance, P.O. Box 91265, Albuquerque, NM 87199**

OPEN SPACE news

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HOURS OF OPERATION

OPEN SPACE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
3615 Los Picaros Rd. SE
7:00 am to 5:00 pm
Monday through Friday
873-6620

ELENA GALLEGOS PICNIC AREA
Winter: 7:00 am to 7:00 pm
Summer: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm
all week
\$1.00 weekdays / \$2.00 weekends
857-8334

**PETROGLYPH NATIONAL MONUMENT
Boca Negra Canyon**
Las Imagenes Visitor Center
8:00 am to 5:00 pm, all week
\$1.00 weekdays / \$2.00 weekends

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK
Rio Grande Nature Center**
2901 Candelaria NW
(505) 344-7240
10:00 am to 5:00 pm, all week
\$1 Adults / \$.50 Children

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS
7:00 am to 11:00 pm, all week
(505) 873-6632 (voice/relay)

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