



Southwest Public Lands People

Employee News of the



San Juan National Forest & San Juan Field Office-BLM Spring, 2004



(Left to right) Bob Dressel, Columbine District TSA, presents a donated ponderosa pine log to Ann Rilling of Durango Nature Studies and her husband, Pete Skartvedt.

Burned Log Donated to Nature Center

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO — A four-foot-diameter ponderosa pine log found its way from the charred landscape of the Missionary Ridge Fire to a new home at the Durango Nature Center.

Ann Rilling, Durango Nature Studies (DNS) Project Director says it will be used to demonstrate tree-ring dating.

"I had seen a similar display at other nature centers and thought it would be a good addition to ours," Rilling says. "I'm excited we're able to use a local tree."

The log will be used in the Habitat Play Space, a new interactive play area for children at the nonprofit organization's Nature Center 12 miles south of Durango. It will join an undulating snake made from old telephone poles, a child-sized adobe anthill, climbing boulders, and a large sundial.

"We plan to burn dates into the rings of the log," Rilling says. "Kids can crawl on the log while learning how old trees grow to be and how we date them."

The exact age of the burned tree hasn't been determined yet, but Rilling guesses that it was more than 300 years old when the Missionary Ridge Fire came through the area.

The donation was made possible by Bob Dressel, Timber Sale Administrator for the Columbine Ranger District. He got in touch with Jim Trumble, the subcontractor hired this fall to remove standing dead trees on the east side of Vallecito Reservoir.

Trumble, owner of JT Timberfalling, wanted to help. He selected a tree that was cut down because it had begun to rot and could pose a danger if it remained standing in the area, which is popular for both summer and winter recreation. Trumble donated time to find the log, cut it to a manageable size, and move it to the road. He even used his own skidder to load the log on a trailer for removal.

"On behalf of the Forest Service, I'd like to thank Jim and his crew for donating their time and equipment to assist Durango Nature Studies," Dressel says.

"Everyone was wonderful to work with, and we're really grateful," Rilling says. "There's no way we could have done it without everyone's help."

DNS provides outdoor educational programs for children and adults. Its Nature Center, open spring and summer, offers hiking trails and outdoor education.

DNS has worked with the BLM and Forest Service for the past decade to support school programs and other educational opportunities.

The nonprofit group also holds a permit with the agencies to offer guided nature hikes and outdoor educational programs on public lands.

(Denise Adamic is a Fort Lewis College student interning with the San Juan Public Lands Center Public Affairs Office.)

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SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS



Carol Says Hi

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO - Carol Guthrie is the new Purchasing Agent in the PLC, taking over for Linda Tanny, who has moved into a regional, yet local, position in Durango.

"This is the first job I've reported to where the person I'm replacing is still around," Carol says. "It's been great having her here to help me feel my way around my new job."

Carol most recently worked as Purchasing Agent and Supply Technician for the National

Interagency Fire Center in Boise, where she was responsible for the upkeep and repair of more than 8,000 radios used in national emergencies.

She also worked in Oregon on the Deschutes NF as Ordering Manager and Purchasing Agent, and in Personnel on the Colville NF.

Carol made the move to Durango this fall, after three and a half years of searching for a new job that would put her closer to Arizona, where her parents now live.

"My friends still joke about how I had wallpapered my bathroom walls with all the rejection notices I had acquired," Carol said. "They're a little jealous and can't believe that I ended in Colorado after all that."

Carol enjoys cross-country skiing and horseback riding. For her 50th birthday, she treated herself to a seven-day cattle drive in southern Utah.

"It wasn't anything like the movie, *City Slickers*. The first morning I woke up with four inches of snow on the ground, but like anything else, you've got to have fun along the way," Carol said.

Pete's Promoted

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO - Pete Merkel was recently promoted to Civil Engineering Technician, responsible for conducting and cataloguing site surveys of trailheads, campgrounds, and administration sites.

Before coming to Durango about two years ago, Pete worked as Engineering Technician and Forest Protection Officer on the Medicine Bow-Routt NF, where he also acted as Lead Forest Technician.

Pete received his bachelors of Science degree in Natural Resources Management from Colorado State University. Pete grew up in Evergreen and has lived in Colorado for more than 30 years.

He and his wife, Keri, who works at Park Elementary School, enjoy many outdoor activities. They look forward to the time when their children, Jeffery, 6, and Cassandra, 3, are old enough to enjoy the backcountry with them.

"We love living here because the weather is more mild than in other parts of Colorado," Pete said. "Being so close to the desert and the mountains makes my job really fun."

DFEA Parties Down



(Left-right) Ann McDonald, Initial Attack Dispatcher, and Kim Round, Landscape Architect, enjoy one of the roving holiday celebrations in the PLC this winter.

By Kathe Hayes

DURANGO – The Durango Federal Employees Association (DFEA) recently donated \$200 to Habitat for Humanity from surplus dues and party fees collected from employees last year.

"They've been struggling since a fire forced them into temporary offices," says Laura Stransky, DFEA Treasurer. "The fire also closed their store."

In other DFEA news, the first-ever roving holiday celebrations in the PLC were a great success, as was the January pancake breakfast.

The next event is the annual St. Patrick's Day lunch on March 17th with traditional corn beef and cabbage on the menu. On April 16th, DFEA will celebrate the end of tax season with the annual Poor Boys Lunch, a feast of beans, chili, and cornbread. It's not too late to pay your membership dues to Laura Stransky. Dues are \$10 for the year.

(Kathe Hayes is DFEA President and SJMA Volunteer Coordinator.)

SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS



Sue Heads SJMA

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO - Sue Bryson is the new Executive Director of the San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA), taking over the position from Jennie Newcomer, who left to start a family.

The position has been restructured to focus on the operational side of the organization, and a new Developmental Director will be hired soon to handle fundraising duties.

Sue, who has been with SJMA for more than eight years, is focusing on

human resource issues and financial management.

"It's our hope to build our volunteer capacity in 2004 to better serve the agencies," she says.

Sue started as a volunteer in 1995, helping to coordinate the first *Share the Trails Team Triathlon*. In 1997, she was hired as part-time Assistant to the Director. After two years, she became Operations Director.

In her past, Sue worked on malpractice cases for an international insurance agency in California. She found Durango by accident.

"I took three years off from my professional career to travel with my two dogs, my car, and my tent," Sue says. "I visited Canada, Mexico, and every state besides Missouri, in a search for Utopia."

"I came through Durango in the fall when the leaves were changing, and the rest is history," she says.

Sue is building a new home from recycled Styrofoam, concrete, and stucco. When she's not working on the house, she enjoys riding horses, hiking, and hanging out with her family of pets.



Denise Helps Out

By Ann Bond

DURANGO - Denise Adamic is the latest Fort Lewis College intern to help publish the employee newsletter. She'll graduate in May with a bachelor's degree in English/Communications.

"I was interested in interning here because I can apply my degree to things I enjoy outside of school," she says.

Denise has worked as a seasonal firefighter for the past two summers on a BLM engine crew in Canon City, where she was born and raised.

"When I was young, we took a family vacation to Yellowstone during the big fires," she says. "Seeing the flames and helicopters was really exciting."

Denise worked on the Million Fire on the Rio Grande NF in 2001, and last year on an Arizona fire along the Mexico border.

"When I get to the end of summer, I'm ready to go back to school and rest my body and work my mind," she says.

Denise also interned with the FLC External Affairs Office, writing press releases and organizing the Lifelong Learning Program. She helped design the campus newspaper, *The Independent*, and volunteers as a tutor at the FLC Writing Center.

After graduation, she'll work another fire season and is considering graduate school. She'd like to teach English at the college level.

Fire Guys Honored

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO — Allen Farnsworth and Randy Lewis recently received a National Wildland Urban Interface Unit/Group Award from the BLM for their work in collaborative fire protection.

The two have helped the San Juan Public Lands Office become a leader in hazardous fuels reduction, wildland fire education, and community risk planning.

"It's an honor to receive this award, but there's so much teamwork that goes into our efforts," Allen says. "Achieving healthy forests and fire-safe communities is something that all of southwest Colorado is working towards, not just us."

"The key to success is a good working relationship with communities in which everyone is doing what feels right for all involved," Randy says.

Allen has worked for San Juan Public Lands for two and half years as Fire Education and Mitigation Specialist. Randy has been with the San Juan since 1987 and is currently the Hazardous Fuels Coordinator.



SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS

Missing that Map Man

By Ann Bond

DURANGO - Jim Shafer has traded in his computer for a bicycle after more than 30 years with the USFS. His agency career began in 1967 as a seasonal Recreation Guard and Timber Technician on the Arapaho NF.

Jim received his Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Management from Michigan State University and went to work as an Ice Observer for the U.S. Coast Guard International Ice Patrol in New York.

"My job was to map sea ice and icebergs by hand," Jim says. "We flew search patterns south of Greenland." This program was started the year after the Titanic sank, to offer current maps of the southern extent of icebergs in the Atlantic to ship captains.

After four years, he was back with the USFS, working in timber on the Arapaho NF, then the White River and Black Hills NFs. Jim's first job on the San Juan NF was Timber Sale Administrator in 1979 for the Animas Ranger District.

In 1984, he moved to the Supervisor's Office as Planning

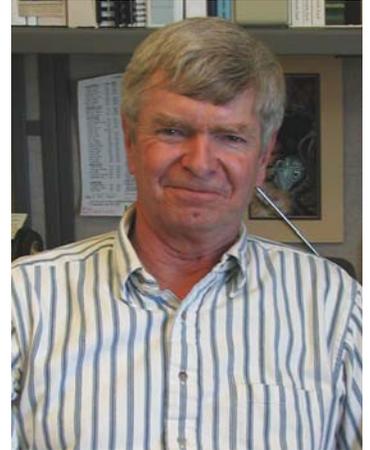
Assistant. In 1993, he began working in Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Dan Greene, GIS Team Leader, says Jim helped bring in the San Juan into the 21st Century. Jim created much of the existing GIS library and converted most of the Forest Planning maps to a digital format.

"Jim knew that by utilizing a computer, you could accomplish many tasks very efficiently," Dan says.

Jim's retirement plans do not include staring at a computer screen, however.

"I've enjoyed working with the technology," Jim says. "But after a while, anything gets old, and I'm looking forward to riding my bike for a change."



COLUMBINE PUBLIC LANDS NEWS

Don is New Trail Boss

By Stan Sparks

Bayfield - Don Kelly is Columbine's new Forestry Technician in charge of trails. He comes to us from Atlanta, Georgia, where he worked for the past four years at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area as Trail Crew Leader/Foreman.

"I was responsible for about 100 miles of trails on 6,000 acres," he says. The park consists of a river corridor and green space that draws up to three million visitors a year.

Part of Don's duties also included serving as a Type-II Wildland Firefighter and an Emergency Medical Technician.

Prior to working for the National Park Service, Don was a Trail Crew Leader/Conservation Work Crew Leader for the Student Conservation Association (SCA) from 1987 to 1999.

He supervised 14 work crews throughout the country for SCA, including a crew that built a handicapped-accessible trail through tundra in Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska.

"I also served as a Wilderness Workskills Instructor, where I trained staff in trail construction and maintenance techniques, tool usage and maintenance, base camp set up, and bear habitat management," he says.

Don and his wife, Margie, are both excited about their move to Durango. They enjoy spending time in the outdoors, especially with their two dogs, Ripley and Cosmo, and house cats, Rocky and Mica.

(Stan Sparks is the Columbine Visitor Information Specialist.)



Leon Passes Away

By Denise Adamic

DURANGO - Leon Lujan, 55, who retired from the BLM San Juan Resource Area in 2002, passed away this fall in Richmond, Virginia, following complications from several strokes.

Leon had worked as a BLM archaeologist in Grand Junction before moving to Durango.

Leon was born in Texas and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He received his bachelor's degree in archaeology from Fort Lewis College in 1991.

Leon is survived by an extended family, including wife, Rosalinda; son, John; and two daughters, Shanti and Lena.



PAGOSA PUBLIC LANDS NEWS



Comings and Goings

By Janet Peterson

PAGOSA SPRINGS – Rose Facker, Information Receptionist (shown at left accepting a retirement gift from NEPA Co-ordinator Rick Jewell), retired from Pagosa's front desk this fall after 11 years of service.

Rose loved working with the public and answering their questions about the District and the community. Many returning visitors continue to ask about her.

Sheila Doppelhammer (at right), Pagosa Range Technician, and husband Gerard Berger became the parents of Anthony Louis Berger on October 11, 2003.

Anthony weighed in at 7 pounds 6 ounces and was 20 inches long. Sheila will be returning soon for another season of field work.

The Pagosa District also said goodbye to Christie LaDue, Forestry Technician, who accepted a promotion to the Chippewa NF in Minnesota.

(Janet Peterson is the Pagosa Office Visitor Information Specialist.)



Peggy Passes Away

By Denise Adamic

PAGOSA SPRINGS - Peggy Jacobson, who worked for the USFS for 25 years and retired from the Pagosa Ranger District last year, passed away in her home in January.

After retiring, Peggy moved to Bloomfield to be with her mother. While there, Peggy worked for Hedgecock Sod and North Star Waters Users of Aztec.

She was part of the Aztec Rebekah Lodge, First United Methodist Church of Bloomfield, and the Bloomfield Extension Club. She remained active on national firefighting-support teams.

Peggy was born and lived most of her life in Pagosa Springs. She is survived by three children, mother, sister, grandchildren, stepchildren, step grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her daughter Rachelle Jacobson, who served as an intern on this newsletter in the 1990s as a Fort Lewis College student, and helped out at the Pagosa Ranger District during recent fire seasons.

A college fund has been set up at Wells Fargo Bank in Pagosa Springs. The account is named the Peggy Jacobson Memorial Fund and will be used to support a forestry recipient.

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DOLORES PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS



New Fuels Team

By Toni Kelly

DOLORES - Mark Krabath and Todd Gardiner now head up a new fuels reduction management team in the Dolores Public Lands Office.

Mark combines 16 years of experience in forestry with Todd's strengths in fire suppression and prescribed fire.

Together, they'll be planning and implementing fuels reduction projects on BLM and FS lands.

"This year's projects are mostly mechanical treatments using a hydro-mower," Mark says.

"Future projects will include hand thinning, broadcast burning or prescribed burning, and pile burning."

Mark moved to Dolores in 1999 as Pre-Sale Forester after working in reforestation in Idaho and Oregon. His new job title is BLM/FS Fuel Forester.

Todd has two new titles: Fuels Technician and New Dad. Daughter Maisy made her debut last summer and is a great source of joy for Todd and his wife, Alisa.

Todd was the BLM/FS Engine Foreman for the Dolores fire shop. He also worked for the Columbine Ranger District and Durango Helitack. Prior to the San Juan, he worked for the Nez Perce and Gifford-Pinchot NFs in trails, wilderness, and fire.

(Toni Kelly is the Dolores Visitor Information Specialist.)

Aleta Watching Over Dolores

By Toni Kelly

DOLORES - Aleta Walker, Law Enforcement Officer at the Dolores Public Lands Office, is originally from Nome, Alaska.

Aleta comes from a natural-resource-oriented family and graduated from the University of Alaska with a double major in Criminal Justice and Paramedics, and a minor in Anthropology.

Aleta has worked for the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division as an undercover narcotics agent in Massachusetts, and the U.S. Coast Guard as a medic. She also worked under contract as a narcotics operative for the Southeast Alaska Narcotics Enforcement Team.

Aleta's first USFS job was in 1995 in Juneau, Alaska. From there, she went to the Medicine Bow NF. While there, she was featured in *Readers Digest* for her rescue of two lost hikers in the Mount Zirkel Wilderness.

"It was intuition that made me go back to look one last time after authorities called off the search," Aleta said. Had she not, the hikers may not have survived after seven days without food and very little water.

Aleta has been spending much of her time on the San Juan handling travel-management violations. Other problems include cattle trespass, abandoned vehicles, firewood cutting without a permit, and violations pertaining to Native American artifacts.

"Most of my violation tips come from the public," Aleta says. "This area has the best community policing I've seen, and I've worked on several Forests."



See the Swamp Things

By Ann Bond

DURANGO - Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 17th, when *Ranger Rick and the Swamp Things* will be playing at Storyville Restaurant in Durango about 5 p.m. during the Durango Bluegrass Meltdown.

The performance is free, but due to their popularity, seats will fill up fast.

"We play in what's called the New Band Showcase," says Rick Ryan, Dolores Public Lands Office BLM Recreation Specialist. "It's for new and first-time bands."

Rick plays guitar and wife Kathy plays mandolin. Other members include Rick Quinn on accordion and keyboard, Karla Jean Miller on fiddle, Jerry Cox on guitar, Andy Hutchinson on banjo and guitar, and Jack Tallmadge on bass.

"Kathy was raised in the swamps of Louisiana, and I've been called Ranger Rick since I taught at a boarding school in the '70s and wore a Smokey Bear hat at school outings," Rick explains. "One year, we were jamming at Michael Burke's Christmas party, and Mike said we should enter the Meltdown. We decided to give it a try."

This will be *Swamp Things*' fourth appearance in the event.

DOLORES PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS



Eric Lands in the West

By Toni Kelly

DOLORES - Eric La Price was born and raised in Erie, Pennsylvania, and had never been out West prior to coming to Dolores.

Eric is also new to the Forest Service. Hired as the NEPA Coordinator/Biological Scientist, he is finding out there is no lack of work on public lands.

He already has a huge workload for fuels-reduction projects and will be helping out with non-fire related projects, as well.

Eric graduated from Gannon University in Erie with a bachelor's degree in Biology/Ecology and certification in Environmental and Occupational Science and Health. He also holds a master's in Environmental Studies from Gannon.

Previously, Eric worked as an Environmental Scientist for Urban Engineers of Erie, Inc., and for the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks on Lake Erie.

"I would like to someday go back to Pennsylvania and be a District Ranger on the Allegheny National Forest", he says.

His hobbies include photography, fitness, hiking and backpacking, kayaking and canoeing, reading and investing. He is owned by Booker, his cat.

Roberta's Not Ready to Retire

By Toni Kelly

DOLORES - Roberta Leicester recently celebrated 11 years of greeting visitors and answering the phone at the Dolores Public Lands Office. Although she'll turn 85 in June, she says she has no plans to retire.

Roberta is from Saratoga, Wyoming, where she was Director of the Saratoga-Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce and the first woman ever appointed to the Wyoming Travel Commission.

After moving to Cortez in the early 1980s, she was hired for part-time office help at Crow Canyon Archaeological Center.

"Back then, the campus consisted of trailer houses and teepees, and the main lodge was under construction" Roberta says. When she left in 1991, she had worked her way up to Assistant Director of the Center.

In 1993, Roberta was invited to come to work for the Dolores Ranger District under the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

"I've seen many changes, most for the better," she says.

Roberta served on the original board for the Cortez Cultural Center and on the Anasazi Historical Board during planning and construction of the Anasazi Heritage Center. She now sits on the Board for the Good Samaritan Center.

Roberta has two children, a son and daughter, and three grandchildren and six great grandchildren.



Celia's a Home Town Girl

By Toni Kelly

DOLORES - Celia Boyd is the new SJMA bookstore manager and Visitor Information Specialist in Dolores. Born and raised in Montezuma County, Celia has the edge when it comes to offering local information to the public.

Celia was raised on the Goff family farm, north of Mancos. She and her husband, Steve, have two children, Shaylie, 15, and Cole, 10.

She also has an extended family in the barnyard, including horses they selectively breed, register, and sell. Steve and Celia host Pony Express Rodeos, which test children on horsemanship skills.

"We started it to give our kids an opportunity to compete in rodeo events, but it has snowballed into a popular summertime event that includes all ages now", Celia says.

Celia also belongs to two shooting clubs that dress in vintage (circa 1890) clothing and use vintage pistols and rifles in competitive situations. She has worked as a wrangler at the Echo Basin Ranch and is well known for her Dutch-oven baking.

MISCELLANEOUS

Sandbags to the Rescue

By Kay Zillich

DURANGO - The San Juan NF recently donated sandbags left over from Missionary Ridge Fire rehabilitation projects to a West Coast county for flood control.

After the fire, runoff from the Weminuche Wilderness threatened Vallecito. The Forest ordered two semi-truck loads of biodegradable burlap bags, which were used to block erosion on 168 acres of steep slopes. The process proved time consuming and expensive, however, so it was abandoned.

Excelsior bales dropped by helicopter to form a weed-free, seed-free mulch in the Wilderness proved a more cost-efficient method on the remaining 140 acres last spring. As hoped, the treated drainages did not suffer damaging floods during the monsoon season.

The next question was what to do with the 150,000 leftover burlap bags. BAER teams did not want them, NRCS had no need, and the Red Cross already had sufficient stockpiles. So some were sent to Idaho to be used as gift bags for local products or for bat habitat. Others were sent off to mountain-trail rehabilitation projects in Colorado, but more than one truckload was still left.

The leftover bags finally found a home with California Emergency Services, as Humboldt County was desperate for sandbags, but had no budget. The county offered to pay shipping, and some 100,000 bags were stuffed onto one truck in January, and sent on their way to help protect California roads and homes from flooding. The remaining 50,000 bags will go to San Joaquin County this spring to reinforce levees.

(Kay Zillich is a SJNF Hydrologist.)



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