SITE LINES

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 4

WINTER 2026

Road Safety and Closures on the SFNF

Recent storms have significantly impacted roads across the Santa Fe National Forest, and conditions can change rapidly. Some routes may be impassable due to flooding, washouts, mud, and storm-related debris. Before visiting a site, please check current road conditions, monitor weather forecasts, and be prepared for changing conditions. Road crews are assessing damage and making emergency repairs as needed.

As a result of these storms, several forest roads are temporarily closed. Motorized vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles, are prohibited on roads when gates are closed, locked, or posted as closed.

Drivers should use extra caution when traveling forest roads, especially after dark. Boulders, downed trees, washouts, and other storm-related hazards may be difficult to see at night. Reduce your speed, stay alert, and allow extra stopping distance to safely react to unexpected obstacles in the road.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: Road and Flood Safety

- Visit the alerts banner on the Santa Fe National Forest website for information regarding current conditions.
- Check current closures and the Motor Vehicle Use Map; obey gates and closure signs.
- Monitor weather and alerts—flash flooding can develop quickly and conditions can change fast.
- Never drive through floodwater or around barricades: Turn Around, Don't Drown.
- Slow down on unpaved roads; expect ruts, washouts, rocks, and downed trees. Use a high-clearance vehicle and appropriate tires.
- On wet roads, reduce speed, increase following distance, and avoid cruise control to limit hydroplaning.
- Treat dips, culverts, and low-water crossings as "no-go" during high flow; stay off bridges over fast-moving water.
- Avoid traveling on narrow canyon roads during or after rainstorms.
- Watch for debris flows, unstable slopes, and areas where the roadway may be undercut.
- Turn around if you encounter standing or running water; conditions can change rapidly.

To check current road conditions, contact our district offices. For Santa Fe National Forest news and updates, visit our website and social media pages.

-- Courtesy of SFNF

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

News from the Forest	2
Council Chair's Message	2
ATL Reports	3
Foundation Report	3
Poshuouinge Erosion Mitigation Project	4
Site Steward Awards	5
Annual Meeting Lecture Videos	6
The Great Wall of the Caja del Rio?	7
Save the Date!	8

Contributors to this issue:

Jana Comstock

Bob Florek

Bruce Herr

Lynne Newell

Gary Newgent

John Pitts

Kathi Turner

The editors thank you!

News from the Forest

The Poshuouinge stabilization project is going strong. Jana Comstock and Robin Gibbs have been working diligently on keeping the project moving forward. They put in a big effort on Oct. 19-21 (see Jana Comstock's story on pg. 4). They are working with the Forest Biologist and Hydrologist for seeding and erosion monitoring.

The Heritage program still has the same personnel. We are hoping to get another detailer (120-day temp) Zone Archaeologist for Pecos/Las Vegas. The previous detailer's temporary promotion ended at the beginning of October, and he has since returned to his home Forest.

We got rain! That is the good news. The concerning news is that, as a result, there are major problems with many roads in the Forest. The Forest engineering group is doing emergency work, but it's a slow process. The Santa Fe and Carson NFs share a single road crew, which means that the Forests have to prioritize road maintenance.

The Las Alamos National Lab (LANL) power line project on the Caja del Rio is permitted. There are multiple archaeological sites along the route that are required to have archaeological and Tribal monitors during all phases of construction. Multiple new agricultural sites have been documented during the first few months of construction (vegetation clearing and road work). The Forest is also monitoring to ensure that they stay within their permit.

Some controlled burns are planned for the fall; check the website for specifics.

-- Kathi Turner

Council Chair's Message

Council and Annual Meeting Report

The Site Steward Council met on Saturday, Oct 10, at the SFNF office. The ATLs gave updates on their areas, and a common refrain was the need for new stewards. The Communications, Training, Education and Budget committees also gave reports.

This was followed by the Annual Meeting for the general membership, with over 30 people attending. Bob Florek gave an update on the SFNF Site Steward organization, including a review of the activity and site visit logs from the last several years (see details below). He also thanked new ATLs Dave Bowman (Rio Chama) and Kris Herbst and Nanci Mon (Jemez) for stepping up this year to fill in for people who have retired.

John Pitts presented the promotional PowerPoint that he and Siobhan Hancock prepared for recruitment efforts. The presentation is available for anyone who wants to use it.

How Are We Doing? A Summary

There has been considerable discussion this year about the perceived decline of our organization and the need to recruit new stewards. The ad hoc Recruitment Committee established a goal of 10 new stewards for 2026. I thought it might be interesting to take a look at our online activity and site visit logs, see what the numbers tell us about our past and present levels of activity, and perhaps make some guesses about the future.

From 2013-2019 we had around 70-80 active stewards, with a high of 90 in 2017, which was the year that we organized a large training session jointly with SiteWatch at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. Many of our current active members, including yours truly, attended that session. The year 2020 brought a noticeable decline in our active membership, most likely associated with the Covid pandemic. Since then, our

-- Continued on pg. 3

ATL Reports

Caja del Rio (Jeff Koester): All sites are being visited regularly. The team found a long "wall" south of Tetilla Peak that is not on the current site list (see the story on pg. 7). The team keeps finding new sites!

Garcia (Jeff Koester): Nothing new to report. (*Note:* The Caja del Rio and Garcia areas have been combined.)

Gallina (Anne Beckett): One site steward moved away, but a new one has joined the team. They are keeping up with site visits.

Jemez (Bob Florek): Kris Herbst reports that they are shorthanded, but 3 couples are active, so they're making regular site visits. [*Note:* A tour to Boletsakwa was planned, but had to be rescheduled due to rain.]

Rio Chama (Dave Bowman): The road to Ku has issues, but is doable. They are trying to cover all the sites before winter.

Pecos (Bob Florek): Visits are ongoing regularly. A new steward, Mike Taylor, has been certified.

Site Steward Foundation Report

Update 11/01/26

The Site Steward Foundation will be organizing the 2027 Pecos Conference. This is the 100th anniversary of the Pecos Conference, and will be held at the Forked Lightning Ranch in Pecos National Historical Park, August 12-15, 2027. If you would like to volunteer for the Pecos Conference, please contact sitestewardfoundation@gmail.com.

If you are not a member of the Site Steward Foundation, or have not renewed your membership for 2027, please consider joining and donating. The Foundation accepts credit cards for membership dues and donations on our website, sitestewardfoundation.org, or they can be mailed to P.O. Box 32224, Santa Fe, NM 87594.
If you would like to be notified of Foundation tours and activities, please subscribe to our email list on the Foundation website. Thank you for your support of site stewards!

— Gary Newgent, President

Council Chair's Message (continued from pg. 2)

numbers have leveled out at around 50-60 active members. Though not as high as pre-Covid levels, to me this seems to be a good target to sustain (10-12 stewards per area team).

The large training session at MIAC resulted in the addition of 22 new stewards in 2017. Following that, the Covid effect seems to have resulted in a very low number joining the group in 2019-2021. We had an online training session in 2022 which added 10 new stewards, and since then we have had an average of 7-8 new stewards per year (including this year).

How does all this affect our work? Despite Covid, we have kept up a constant level of 150-200 visits per year. As Mike Bremer noted, site visits were a good activity during Covid, when there wasn't much else to do!

All this leads me to be cautiously optimistic about our future, providing we continue to reach out and recruit new, younger stewards. (By "younger" I mean under 70!) The best way to get new people involved is through personal contact, so I encourage everyone to get the word out about our organization. Our new flyers are available to put up in the community (contact Grace Brill, gbrill505@gmail.com), and you can use John's excellent presentation to talk about our activities to small groups.

Thanks to everyone for making our program an ongoing success!

-- Bob Florek

Poshuouinge Erosion Mitigation Project Update and Thank You

A big THANK YOU to the site stewards who helped with the Poshuouinge Erosion Mitigation Project implementation work in October. This is the second year of implementation at this ancestral Tewa village.

This year, we focused on seeding and mulching at the site in some priority areas on the eastern side. We first made thousands of seed balls on October 6 at the Institute for Applied Ecology in Santa Fe. The seed balls were made from a seed mix of native grasses, clay, and compost.

Next, we had fieldwork days with volunteers on October 19-21. First, we hand-carried cubic yards of mulch up to the site via buckets and backpacks. Second, we installed hundreds of connectivity modifiers (ConMods) which are x-shaped screens fastened to the ground that modify—or break up—the continuous bare ground. The shape helps trap soil and prevent erosion, creating a protected environment for plants to take root. Third, we direct-seeded the site by hand with native grass and wildflower mixes combined with mulch. Last, we spread the seed balls by hand.



Susan McGrew, Anne Beckett, and Grace Brill making seed balls

There's always more to do, but we made great progress this fall! We'll look forward to observing the results next growing season.



Pamina Haddock

- Thank you, Pamina Haddock, for three full days of hard work at the site! You were amazing out there!
- Thank you, Bob Greene, for one day of hard work at the site!
- Thank you, Anne Beckett, Grace Brill, and Susan McGrew for helping to make seed balls!
- Thank you, Dave Bowman, for rounding up emergency supplies through the Site Steward budget!



Bob Greene

-- Article and photos, Jana Comstock, Zone Archaeologist for the Espanola and Coyote Ranger Districts

Site Steward Awards

Every fall, the Awards Committee (Paula Lozar, Susan McGrew, and Becky Johnson) requests award nominations from ATLs and AATLs for Site Stewards who have provided outstanding service to the program in the previous year. At the Annual Meeting in October 2026, the following Site Stewards received awards and appropriate fetishes:

K. Paul Jones (Mountain Lion) -- One of the Site Stewards' Old Guard, K. Paul Jones has retired after 20 years of service to our Program. K. Paul's contributions to the Site Steward Program are numerous, including many years as ATL of the Rio Chama District, Council Chair of the Site Steward Program, and developer of documents outlining duties and guidelines for Site Stewards and ATLs. His knowledge of the many archaeological sites in the area is legendary; fortunately he has passed on his photos, GPS notations, documentation, and maps of his many explorations to newer generations. He has mentored many aspiring Site Stewards over the years, freely giving of his knowledge and experience. We owe a great debt to Dr. Jones.



In addition to the fetish, the Awards Committee presented K. Paul with a framed photo of himself in the field. (The photo, by Carolyn Florek, appeared on pg. 6 of the Fall issue of *Site Lines*.) Photo of K. Paul Jones and Paula Lozar by Bob Florek.

Paul Leo (Badger) -- Paul had the foresight to record and save our last live training sessions on Zoom and make the recordings available online. These recordings have formed the basis of our ongoing training, provided as needed to new Site Stewards, a great improvement over the old method of waiting until we had enough candidates to schedule a class. He has also provided steady ongoing support of our website, email, and other IT needs.

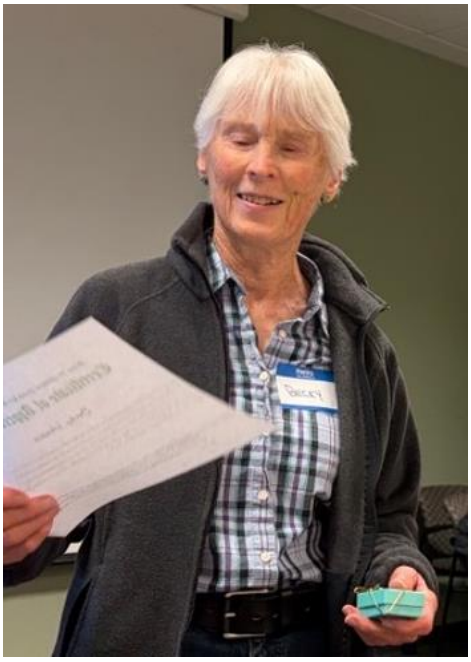
Siobhan Hancock (Dragonfly) -- Siobhan has been an active and enthusiastic participant in Council meetings. In addition to organizing the Mesa Prieta get-together, which resulted in several new stewards and increased our visibility, she has helped with the Education Committee, with Annual Meeting planning, and with plans for invigorating next year's meetings and the Site Steward program in general. We are already benefiting from her marketing skills.

-- Continued on pg 6

Site Steward Awards, continued from pg. 5

Elaine Gorham (Hawk) -- Elaine was honored along with her co-AATL for the Gallina Team, Becky Johnston. Their ATL, Anne Beckett, is grateful that she can depend on them to perform the responsibilities of the ATL in her absence, and she values their input when discussing sites, weather, and other forest considerations. Elaine, who is passionate about the Gallina sites and knows them better than anyone, has introduced new Site Stewards to the sites, and has made extra visits when there has been an issue or concern. The Gallina team is very lucky to have her.

Becky Johnson (Beaver) -- Becky was honored along with her co-AATL for the Gallina Team, Elaine Gorham. In addition to backing up their ATL and providing valuable input, Becky has gone above and beyond her AATL responsibilities and has recruited new Site Stewards. The Gallina team is very lucky to have her.



Becky Johnson. Photo by Bruce Herr.

Annual Meeting Talks Available on SFNF-SS Website

The Site Stewards Program Annual Meeting on October 10, 2026, featured talks by two outstanding speakers:

- *History of the Site Steward Program* by Mike Bremer, former Heritage Program Lead/Forest Archaeologist of the Santa Fe National Forest
- *Growth of the Pueblo Society in the Lower Rio Chama Valley,* by Timothy D. Maxwell, Director Emeritus, Museum of New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies

For the benefit of site stewards who were unable to attend the meeting, these talks were recorded, and the videos are available on the SFNF-SS website. Go to the “Events and Lectures” tab on the home page to access the videos. Thanks to Bob Florek for recording the talks!

HELP WANTED!

Thankfully, all our Area Team Lead positions are filled, but we will be needing new council members in 2027. If you are interested in participating, either as an officer or as an at-large council member, please contact Bob at bobflorek@gmail.com.

The Great Wall of the Caja del Rio?

Many of us have been to China and, with a little bit of luck, had a chance to experience a walk on the Great Wall of China. Well, I am pleased to report the discovery of something distantly akin on the Caja del Rio, not far from the Bajada Escarpment.

Driving back from an attempt to find the remains of an archaic site south of Tetilla Peak, I spotted a line across the desert flats a short distance to the West. On closer examination, we found a line of rocks deposited on the surface laid out in a North/South direction. Unlike the other trick tanks found on the Caja, which involved bulldozing soil to create a depression to hold water for grazing cattle, this had very different characteristics. First, it ran absolutely straight and showed no evidence of bulldozing. The dimensions were 107 meters in length, 2 meters wide, and 3/10 of a meter high. OK, no "great wall," but not what we expected to find out in the middle of flat terrain. It appeared to be made of small basalt rocks gathered from the immediate vicinity, which probably had been picked up and carried by hand to construct the "wall."

I have puzzled about this find ever since. It does not fit the pattern of a trick tank, but does show some evidence of water collecting on the East side due to some slight evidence of vegetation (visible in Google map images). Consequently, some interpreters view it as a "historic rock alignment." But when and how it was built remains a mystery. And what practical purpose made it worth the effort of physically collecting thousands of rocks and making such a perfect alignment with clear borders and direct North/South direction? Any other ideas or evidence of a similar structure in the SFNF?

These two photos show views of the wall/dam/alignment taken from the same spot (looking North and South, respectively).





-- Article and photos, John Pitts

Site Lines

is published quarterly by the Santa Fe National Forest Site Steward Program

Editor:
Paula Lozar
(505) 473-3479
lozarpaula@cs.com

Assistant Editor:
Susan McGrew
(505) 424-3932
sumac3b@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

www://sfnfsitestewards.org

Save the Date!

December 18, 2026, Alan R. Sandstrom and Pamela Effrein Sandstorm, Ethnographers, *Religious Iconography in Contemporary Nahua Pilgrimage,* 6:00 PM, Santa Fe Woman's Club. For tickets, see https://www.mesaprietapetroglyphs.org.

January 7-10, 2027, AIA Annual Meeting, Boston, MA. See https://www.archaeological.org/programs/professionals/annual-meeting/

January 19, 2027, Paul Duran, *Built in the past, for the future: 40 years of implementing the City of Santa Fe's archaeological and historic district's code and ordinance*, Santa Fe Archeological Society, 6:30 PM, Pecos Trail Café, Santa Fe.

January 23, 2027, Site Steward Council Meeting, 9:30 AM, SFNF headquarters, 17 Forest Lane, Santa Fe.

April 7–11, 2027, Society for American Archaeology (SAA) 92nd Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, Indiana. See https://saa.org/AnnualMeeting/SAAAnnualMeeting/Annual-Meeting.aspx

April 22–26, 2027, American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA) 2027 Conference, Prescott, Arizona. Details to follow: https://arara.wildapricot.org/Events.

August 12-15, 2027. 100th anniversary of the Pecos Conference, to be held at the Forked Lightning Ranch in the Pecos National Historical Park. Details will be provided closer to the date.