



Council Chair's Message

By now I assume the improved weather has allowed everyone to resume their site steward activities.

At the Site Steward Council meeting last month, we were pleased to approve the applications from three new stewards—Katie Gregonis, Siobhan Hancock, and Mike Taylor. Katie and Siobhan have been assigned to the Caja del Rio area; Mike has been assigned to the Pecos area. And I'm pleased to report we have additional applicants in the pipeline.

The council also certified two site stewards who have completed their provisional year—Bob Guarieri (Gallina) and Thomas Studer (Rio Chama).

Kathi Turner (Heritage Program Manager) provided a dismal report

on staffing and funding shortages due to the actions of the new federal administration. Staffing shortages are now more than 50% in the Heritage Program. Fortunately, we do have archaeologists Becky Baisden and Sammy Griego for the Jemez, Jana Comstock and Robin Gibbs for Espanola/Coyote, and Amy Wakefield is still at Pecos/Las Vegas.

Annual Meeting: Mark your calendars! The annual meeting for all site stewards will be on Saturday, September 20. It will be in Santa Fe, but we are still exploring the location. You can count on several presentations on topics of interest to you, interspersed with a free box lunch. Further details, via email, will be sent to everyone closer to the event.

— K. Paul Jones



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Contributors to this issue:

K. Paul Jones
Gary Newgent
Kathi Turner

The editors thank you!

Site Stewards Needed!

The SFNF Site Steward program is always in need of more site stewards to ensure that all areas are thoroughly covered, and that there is backup when site stewards are unavailable or have to leave the program. We are working on remedying this situation in the near future.

However, one of our best recruiting methods is word of mouth. If you have friends who like archeology and the outdoors, and find the idea of site visits interesting, urge them to contact us. If you are visiting a site and run into hikers who are curious what you're doing there, tell them about the site steward program and suggest that they follow up with us (we have actually gained new site stewards that way).

Contact information is on our website: sfnsitestewards.org

News from the Forest

The Santa Fe NF is going through some changes. A lot of employees have elected to leave the Agency through various offers made by the Administration. The SFNF Heritage program lost one employee,; however, some other programs have been hit much harder. We still are not sure what the new organization will look like, as things seem to be changing every week.

Our Deputy Forest Supervisor accepted a Forest Supervisor job in Oregon and will be leaving in mid-May. Our new Deputy is from the Regional Office and has a background in the Range Program. We are also getting a new Public Services Staff Officer (my supervisor). That position has been vacant for over two years. Jessica Dunn is also from the Regional Office, with a background in Landscape Architecture and Recreation.

Jana Comstock and Robin Gibbs are working hard to continue the projects on Poshuouinge. The heritage compliance was completed and signed by NM SHPO. The NEPA has been

signed by the District Ranger. Both Santa Clara and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblos have been on site visits and are very supportive of the project and the ongoing collaboration to work towards stabilizing the area around the site. There are plans for June for the YCC crew to help build fence that will separate more of the site area from the grazing allotment.

Becky Baisden is working on the finishing touches for the large interpretative sign at Rattlesnake Ridge. The District Ranger, Jeremy Goldston, visited the area a couple of months ago. and there are plans to work on the trails through the site area. He is also supportive of more smaller interpretative signs throughout the area. and possibly incorporating a few benches.

Our team is working in support of many compliance projects across the Forest. and without seasonal employees we anticipate a busy field season. We appreciate the work the Site Stewards do to assist in monitoring sites and areas across the Forest.

— Kathi Turner

Stage 1 Fire Restrictions Implemented in Santa Fe National Forest

Due to elevated wildfire risk, the Santa Fe National Forest has implemented Stage 1 Fire Restrictions forest-wide beginning Sunday, May 4, 2025, until September 30, 2025.

The decision to implement fire restrictions is based on various factors, including the availability of firefighting resources, current drought conditions, weather forecast, the time of year, and fuel moisture levels.

Prohibited under Stage 1 Fire Restrictions are:

1. Building, maintaining, or using a fire outside of a designated fire ring or grill provided by the Forest Service in a developed

area. Stoves, lanterns, or heaters fueled by propane or other liquefied petroleum fuels may be used forest-wide in areas cleared of flammable materials within 3 feet of the device, if they meet manufacturer's safety specifications and have on/off switches.

2. Smoking is allowed only in closed vehicles or buildings and developed recreation sites.
3. Chainsaw use is permitted.

According to Kathi Turner, these restrictions won't affect site visits. However, conditions can change, so be alert for further instructions from your ATLS/AATLS.

ATL Reports

Caja del Rio (Gary Newgent for Jeff Koester): There are two possible new site stewards for this area (friends of Gary's). John Pitts and Bob Greene went to Norte. Cameras may be needed there and at the Los Aguajes shrine due to vandalism.

Gallina (Anne Beckett): Site visits have started. They reviewed the list of sites and created a total report. They lost 2 teams, but another team picked up the sites from one of those teams.

Garcia (Will Dearholt): Guaje has been visited. Roads are in rough shape, and there are the usual problems with cattle. The rattlesnakes are out for the season.

Jemez (Will Dearholt): Will has consulted with Cathy Gates and Anne White. He plans to visit any sites he hasn't yet seen in mid-May. Bears are awake and may be present.

Pecos (Bruce Herr for Bob Florek): They lost 3 team members, but have one new site steward, and perhaps a second. All sites have been visited at least once.

Rio Chama (K. Paul Jones): The road is washed out along the Rio del Oso. They can get to Ku, but not much farther. No one is yet assigned to the Maestas and Pesede sites, and fixing the road isn't feasible. Wendy Dolci (et al.) may try going out there in an ATV.

Site Steward Foundation Report

05/07/25

The annual meeting of the Site Steward Foundation and SiteWatch was held Saturday, February 8, 2025 in Albuquerque at the Hibben Center, University of New Mexico.

A two-day tour of sites in the Gallina area of the Santa Fe National Forest north of Cuba is currently planned for October.

The Site Steward Foundation is offering a H. Wayne Nelson grant of \$1,000 with a grant application deadline of September 30, 2025 and a grant award date by December 1, 2025. To apply for a Foundation grant, please contact Gary Newgent at sitestewardfoundation@gmail.com for a grant application.

The Archaeological Society of New Mexico's annual meeting was hosted by the Albuquerque Archaeological Society, May 2-4, 2025 at the Nativo Lodge in Albuquerque.

The Archaeoastronomy Conference will be held at the Ruidoso Convention Center in Ruidoso July 7-10, 2025. For more information, see jornadaresearchinstitute.org

The 2025 Pecos Conference will be organized by the Bears Ears Partnership and held near Blanding, Utah in the Abajo Mountains, Manti-La Sal National Forest, August 7-10, 2025. See pecosconference.org.

The Site Steward Foundation has been selected as the organizer of the 2027 Pecos Conference, with plans for the 100th anniversary of the Pecos Conference to be held on Rowe Mesa in the Santa Fe National Forest.

If you are not a member of the Site Steward Foundation, or have not renewed your membership for 2025, please consider joining or renewing today. The Foundation accepts credit cards for membership dues and donations on our website sitestewardfoundation.org, or checks 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

News Stories of Interest

Volunteers Preserving the Sonoran Desert

A recent news story (5/12/25) in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* highlighted how volunteers are helping to keep invasive grasses at bay in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona. A group called Friends of the Tonto, founded by Patti Fenner (formerly noxious weeds specialist in the Tonto National Forest), has been monitoring the urban/wildland interface and pulling invasive grasses. Not only does this preserve the ecological balance in the desert environment, but it helps to reduce the risk of wildland fires by removing highly flammable materials that endanger native cactuses, such as the iconic saguaros. Citizen scientists have been instrumental in obtaining state funding to apply herbicides and in recruiting youth groups to cull invasive plants. Cuts to Forest Service personnel in an already understaffed National Forest have made volunteers like Friends of the Tonto crucial to forest health. (Original story by Austyn Gaffney, *The New York Times*. Photo by Paula Lozar, Catalina State Park near Tucson, but it's still the Sonoran Desert.)



Humans Have Been Perfecting Avocados for 7,500 Years

According to a paper published [March 3, 2025] in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, people in what we today call Honduras made avocados a part of their diets at least 10,000 years ago and purposefully improved them starting more than 7,500 years ago — first by managing wild trees, and then by selectively planting new ones, to encourage thicker rinds and larger fruit.

This means fruit domestication at this site began thousands of years before the arrival of more commonly studied plants like maize.

“People were domesticating and cultivating their forests” long before they were planting crops in fields,” said Amber VanDerwarker, a professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara and an author of the paper. ...

For the new study, researchers focused on a site in western Honduras called El Gigante, an elevated cave that people began frequenting 11,000 years ago. ... [Over the centuries, the people who lived there selectively planted and pruned avocado trees to achieve larger fruits with more robust rinds. The earliest avocados were cherry-sized, but, by 4500 years ago, human intervention resulted in apricot-sized fruit and rinds that exceeded natural variation.]

... While our concepts of plant husbandry come and go, some things are more timeless. One reason to want to cultivate a thick avocado rind is for ease of scooping, said Dr. VanDerwarker, inspiring other tasty imaginings: “I think people have probably been eating guacamole now for a good 10,000 years.”

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Save the Date!

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August 7-10, 2025: The annual Pecos Conference will be held near Blanding, Utah in the Abajo Mountains in the Manti-La Sal National Forest. For more information, see pecosconference.org

September 20, 2025: SFNF Site Stewards Annual Meeting: Santa Fe, location and schedule to be announced.

Site Lines needs your input!

Thanks to the people who submitted articles for this issue of *Site Lines*. We'd like to hear from more of you. If you see a pertinent news story, or if you've had an experience or taken a trip that you think might interest your fellow site stewards, please feel free to forward it to us for possible inclusion in a future issue.

— The Editors