

SAN JUAN MOUNTAIN NOTES

AN OCCASIONAL ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER FROM THE MOUNTAIN STUDIES INSTITUTE

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NEWS

- MSI Expands its Regional Presence to Fort Lewis College, Durango
This Fall, MSI opened offices on campus at Fort Lewis College. Executive Director, Ellen Stein, and Research and Education Director, Koren Nydick, are newly based on campus in Berndt Hall. MSI operations in Silverton are being run by two new staff (see below). The move allows MSI to strengthen its important partnership with Fort Lewis, support students enrolled in the Mountain Studies Minor, build FLC's research capacity, and enhance use of MSI's Silverton Field Station.
- Geotechnologies Short Course Successfully Offered by MSI
MSI coordinated a weekend course on October 22-23 introducing participants to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technologies and their applications to environmental and social issues in mountain environments. Dr. Joseph Kerski, an educator with the U.S. Geological Survey, taught the course which was accredited for graduate teacher re-licensure credit by Colorado School of Mines. Participants included teachers, government staff, and private planners. MSI provided free tuition for two San Juan County employees.
- Funding Awards
The Colorado Department of Local Affairs granted San Juan County \$60,000 Energy and Minerals Impact Assistance funding to assist MSI over the next 2 years. The US Environmental Protection Agency-Region 8 awarded MSI \$80,000 to expand the fen wetland monitoring and assessment program throughout the San Juan Mountains and to provide training to regional land managers. The Fen Project is a collaboration with Dr. David Cooper (Colorado State University) and Dr. Rod Chimner (Michigan Tech). Learn about the fen project at www.mountainstudies.org/Research/fenProject.htm.
- Mountain Studies Minor Approved by Fort Lewis College
Students can sign up for this interdisciplinary minor for Spring Semester 2006. See www.fortlewis.edu/departamental_webpages/mtn_studies_minor/default.asp for a description and requirements. As best we know, this is the first undergraduate academic program focused on mountain studies.
- International Mountain Day Celebration
MSI held an open-house on November 29 for students and faculty to learn about MSI, the Mountain Studies Minor, and Funding Opportunities. The open house was followed by a seminar, "Global Climate Change and its Impact on Mountains of the West" by Dr. Jonathan Overpeck, Director of the Institute for the Study of Planet Earth at the University of Arizona and a member of MSI's Board of Directors. A second talk, "Snow Science in the San Juans: Development of New Hi-Tech Tools for Snow Avalanche and Hydrology Applications" was given on December 2 by Dr. H.P. Marshall with the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, Institute for Alpine and Arctic Research, University of Colorado. All events were well attended. Fort Lewis College co-sponsored and hosted the events.
- Colleges and Universities Base Winter Courses at MSI's Field Station
Prescott College students arrived in Silverton on January 10 for a 3-week course in Avalanche Forecasting. Students from Northern Arizona University and University of Minnesota will return to Silverton for one week February 19-26 for a winter snow and ice field camp. Another Prescott class, Mountain Leadership, will arrive in late February for a one-week stay February 28-March 3.

MSI will host these students and their professors at MSI's Silverton headquarters at the Avon Hotel Field Station. Additional class trips are being scheduled for spring and summer 2006.

- Wetlands, Air Quality, Global Change, and Trails Funding Sought

Three proposals were submitted to EPA, Region 8, for Wetland Environmental Education, Air Quality Monitoring and Outreach, and Establishing a Long-Term Monitoring Program for Mountain Wetlands. MSI and San Juan County collaboratively developed and submitted a proposal to the Colorado Parks Trail Program for the development of the Rainbow Route trail near Silverton. MSI and San Juan County committed \$1,000 matching funds each to the proposed work. MSI also submitted a proposal to the National Science Foundation for a 'Research Experience for Undergraduates' site grant, "Understanding the Susceptibility of Mountain Ecosystems and Communities to Global Change, San Juan Mountains, Colorado."

- MSI Thanks Outgoing and Welcomes New Board Members, Officers

Beverly Rich is turning in one of her many hats, having served as one of MSI's founding board members since 2001. Bill Dodge, Interim Silverton Town Administrator, will succeed Beverly. Bill brings business and regional planning expertise to MSI. Bob Delves of Telluride has been elected to serve as MSI's Board President, succeeding Charlie Burnham who will remain on the board. Dr. Jonathan "Peck" Overpeck, will serve as Board Vice-President to succeed Rob Blair, who will also remain on the board. Peck is the Director of the Study of Planet Earth and Professor of Geosciences at the University of Arizona. His expertise includes global change research and stakeholder-driven science.

- MSI Co-Hosts Holiday Celebration & Alpine Loop Video Presentation

In concert with the San Juan Alpine Task Force, MSI held a holiday open-house at the Silverton Town Hall on December 15, 2005 and joined the Task Force in presenting a video, "The Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway: Opportunity Knows No Boundaries". The video was funded by the Bureau of Land Management and presents challenges to the preservation of the Alpine Loop, use of spatial data to prioritize conservation areas, and potential tools for conserving the environmental and cultural landscape. About 50 people attended. See www.alpineloop.com

- Staff Appointments: MSI Welcomes Two New Part-Time Staff

Debbie (Brown) Childers joined MSI as Finance Director in fall 2005. Blake Meneken was hired in November as a Project and Operations Assistant. Both bring terrific skills to the MSI team and work out of MSI's Silverton Headquarters at the Avon Hotel. Winter hours are Tuesday-Friday.

OPPORTUNITIES

- MSI 2006 Mini-Grant Program

MSI offers funding for undergraduates, graduate students, and recent graduates to conduct research in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern, Colorado. Up to \$2,500 per proposal will be awarded with a total available of at least \$5,000. \$10,000 was awarded in 2005. Project duration is one year. Proposals are due March 10 and must have a tie to MSI's research program. For more information, see www.mountainstudies.org/Research/minigrant.htm.

- Fort Lewis College Funding for Field-Based Mountain Studies

In FY 2006, President Bartel earmarked \$5,000 to fund student research projects and class field trips to MSI's Silverton field station. Faculty applications for class trips are due January 27. Student applications for research funding are due March 24.

- Snow Systems Course offered through Fort Lewis College

An intensive 5-day, 2 credit hour introduction to snow science and winter ecology is scheduled at MSI's Silverton field station on March 5-10 during FLC's spring break. Koren Nydick, MSI's Director of Research & Education, and Chris Landry, Executive Director of the Center for Snow & Avalanche Studies, will teach the course. The course is proposed through FLC's Enrichment Program.

- MSI's Avon Hotel Serves as an Alternative Energy/Sustainable Forestry Demonstration Project - The Colorado Governor's Office of Energy Management and Conservation, Forest Energy Corporation, and the Colorado State Forest Service are partnering with MSI to use the Avon Hotel (and other Silverton sites) as a demonstration in the use of a new pellet stove designed to burn whole tree pellets from regional pinion-juniper fire mitigation thinnings that, until now, have produced only non-merchantable timber. A 60,000 BTU stove was installed at the Avon this fall. The goal is to build a pellet stove production facility in the region and support an industry of small-scale forestry operations in southwest Colorado.

IN DEVELOPMENT

- MSI's Benchmark publication, summary of accomplishments 2004-05, is under development and is scheduled to be completed by March 31. View the inaugural issue of The Benchmark 2002-04 - www.mountainstudies.org/Admin/photos/MSI_News_Sept_2004.pdf. Please use the contact form www.mountainstudies.org/contact/default.asp to request the 2004-05 new edition.
- Several other grant proposals are in preparation, such as a Citizen Science Monitoring Program for the San Juan Mountains. Volunteers collect data on air quality and climate.
- "Wetlands of the San Juan Mountain Region: Knowledge and Tools for Landowners and Other Residents" is almost complete. This outreach booklet is funded by the US-EPA, Region 8, with help from the Ballantine Family Fund.
- MSI is preparing a "Research Program Portfolio" to help communicate funding needs to foundations and other charitable givers.

Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) is a 501 (c)3 not-for-profit mountain research and education institution and high-altitude field station with headquarters in Silverton, Colorado and offices at Fort Lewis College in nearby Durango. MSI's mission is to enhance understanding and sustainable use of the San Juan Mountains and its communities through research and education.

Please see www.mountainstudies.org for more information, including how to become a member. To be added to or removed from our mailing list, please go to: www.mountainstudies.org/contact/.