

Colorado Trail Foundation Field Operations Center Open for Business

The idea of a permanent facility to house the vast array of equipment used to maintain and improve The Colorado Trail was just a dream 10 years ago. Then, as Trail volunteers have done for the past 40 years, they dug in, and today the George Miller Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs is a reality. The facility is a major commitment to sustaining the CTF stewardship on all 567 miles of The Colorado Trail, nearly all of which is on National Forest.



On Saturday, June 2, 2018, National Trails Day, a dedication ceremony was held. In attendance were 120 supporters, including three employees from the US Forest Service, Brenda Yankoviak, Jim Pitts and Michelle Mueggler.



CTF adopter volunteer together with U.S. Forest Service, Jim Pitts.



CTF Field Ops Manager, Brent Adams, and USFS Region 2, Brenda Yankoviak.

At a cost of more than a half-million dollars, it is the largest single project ever undertaken by The Colorado Trail Foundation.

The official dedication comes 30 years after the late Gudy Gaskill, “Mother of The Colorado Trail,” led dedication ceremonies in Denver and Durango to commemorate completion of the Trail itself a year earlier.

“This is a momentous time for The Colorado Trail,” said Steve Staley, who has chaired the CTF’s Board of Directors since 2008 and been a volunteer for more than three decades. “The new FOC will help ensure that the CT will maintain its status as a premier long-distance hiking, biking and riding trail for generations to come.”



CTF board members and staff in attendance. Facility namesake, George Miller, at left.

“Special recognition goes to Bill Manning and Office Manager Amy Nelson for keeping the ship on course throughout construction, and particularly to Field Operations Manager Brent Adams, a former civil engineer whose expertise proved invaluable to the project,” Staley says. “He oversaw the project from start to finish. It’s hard to overstate Brent’s contributions.”

Major donors to the project are the Benson Family Foundation, which supplemented its initial \$40,000 donation in 2016 with another \$15,000 at the end of last year; the Gates Family Foundation, \$25,000; the Jackson Family Fund, \$10,000; and Chuck & Linda Lawson, \$10,000. More than 500 additional donors contributed.

Construction on the two buildings that make up the FOC began last year following a groundbreaking ceremony in May. The 1,600-square-foot main building features an office and storage and maintenance areas. A 1,900-square-foot storage building provides space for the CTF's trail crew equipment and water tank trailers. Today, for the first time in the Trail's more than 40-year history, we are able to store and maintain all of our equipment in one secure place protected from the elements.



Main, 35' x 45' equipment maintenance building, with CTF volunteers putting on finishing touches.



25' x 85' trailer storage building on the day of the dedication.

Poncha Springs was chosen as the site for the FOC because of its location near the midway point of the Trail. Not only is Poncha the ideal spot to dispatch equipment to crews working all along trail stretching between Denver and Durango, it is strategically located within a 50-mile radius of most of the trail work for the next 20 years.



CTF volunteers at the new Field Operations Center helping prepare for 2018 Trail Crews.

In a surprise announcement at the December Holiday Party, it was revealed that the FOC would be named in honor of former CTF Board Chairman George Miller, whose involvement in the Trail goes back almost to the beginning, including 20 years as volunteer operations manager. Throughout those years, he stored and maintained much of the trail equipment now at the FOC at his property in Manitou Springs.

“No one has done more for the Trail than George Miller,” Staley said in making the announcement, “so it is entirely appropriate that we name the FOC after him.”



Miller has continued his service by helping Adams in getting the buildings ready for operation. That includes installing cabinets, shelving, and performing other finish work. A “trail crew” led by Miller focused on landscaping the property.