

@ The Preserve

Protecting the history and future of the Monument Preserve

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Election Night!
March 13th.
Renew your
membership &
vote!

Upcoming Events

FOMP Board Meetings

7 pm, Classroom at the Monument Fire Center. Everyone is invited!

Tues, March 13th

Tues, April 10th

Tues, May 8th

Mel Rezac Memorial Tree Planting

10 am, @Main Trailhead Parking Lot

Sat, April 7th

alternate date April 14th

Hot Shot Potluck

Early April—date/time TBA via email

USFS Memorial Grove Ceremony

Sat, May 5th

Trail Maintenance Nights

6 pm, @ Main trailhead. Tools provided, wear jeans, gloves, bring water.

Tues, May 8

Tues, Jun 12

Tues, July 10

Tues, Aug 14

Tues, Sep 11

(dates weather permitting)

719-640-1347 for more info

THE LOSS OF A FOUNDER

by Jon Nordby

This past year we lost Mel Rezac, one of FOMP's founding members. Mel spent most of his career with the USFS across the West, finishing as the Forester at the Air Force Academy. Mel had a lifetime of knowledge about trees, soils, noxious weeds, live-stock, history, and all things "ecosystem": he knew how they worked together and was a perfect mentor to the newly formed FOMP group. Mel's retirement was our blessing, and he brought his knowledge and work ethic to bear serving FOMP, the Sioux Tribes in South Dakota, and the community around him.

Mel and his wife, Donna, helped found and form FOMP's charter with Mary Carew and other local residents concerned about the



Mel Rezac, one of the founding members of FOMP

Preserve. Mel's talents made him a natural to help address noxious weed issues in the Preserve, often picking knapweed with Donna by hand after the rainstorms loosened the roots. His soils knowledge helped guide and route some of the early trails that will be used in the Preserve for many years to come. He and Donna also helped gather and catalog much of the historical information we have on the origins of the Preserve as a seedling Nursery, including priceless maps and photos. Mel and Donna, their house backing to the Preserve near the southeast boundary, surely had some exciting hours in 1989 when the

Berry Creek fire burned less than one-third mile from their house, through the Preserve and up the face of Mount Herman.

How better to honor a forester, and steward of the land, than by continuing his and FOMP's effort to restore the fire damage by planting seedlings and trimming oak out from around existing pine seedlings in the burn area? Please plan on joining us to honor Mel's life and important FOMP contributions during our tree planting project, scheduled for Saturday April 7 (backup date April 14) at the Main Trailhead Parking Lot.

Sat. April 7th, 10am

Stay tuned for more details by subscribing to the email list (info@fomp.org) or visit the website (www.fomp.org).

BLUE BIRD TRAIL

by Hermann Spielkamp

As in previous years around the end of March, the 4H kids from Black Forest and I are planning to do a day of repairing and cleaning the blue bird houses in the Preserve to get them ready for a new season.

During the winter, the 4H group works under the guidance of Frank Puckett in their woodwork shop/class to build these bird houses to specifications published by Donald and Lillian Stokes, authorities on the subject. The bird houses are built with raised metal screen floors to keep parasites at bay, ventilation

holes, slats on the inside below the entry hole for the young ones to climb, and small entry holes with predator guards to keep bigger



BLUE BIRD TRAIL— (CONT.)

birds from accessing the houses and robbing the brood. Even so, the gentle Blue Birds have to share the houses with Tree Swallows, Chickadees, Nuthatches and Wrens which all seem more aggressive. Most of the frequent hikers in the Preserve excitedly share the news with each

other about the first spotting of the Western Blue Bird. They may not be the swallows of Capistrano, but for the Preserve they are the messengers of spring. Over the last 15 years that I have monitored the nesting boxes, the "blue bird

trail" has grown to over 20 bird houses. It is very enjoyable to have these colorful birds around.



RESTORING THE FOREST

by Diane J. Strohm

Planting a New Forest

The "Berry" Fire, also called the Mount Herman Fire, occurred nearly 23 years ago. At a quick glance, much of the landscape appears to be still largely denuded



of trees. The Friends of Monument Preserve, along with help from local Scout troops and other volunteers, has planted nearly 2,000 pine seedlings over the past five years alone. Due to the drought which started in late 1999 and continues to this day, mortality of these seedlings has been fairly high and growth on the survivors relatively low. But an estimated two-thirds of these seedlings are still focusing on developing healthy root systems, and should show soon vigorous crown growth.



Planting in portions of the burn area is essential, since much of the seed source was destroyed. The predominant ponderosa pine produces heavy seeds, which typically disseminate within 75' of the parent tree, unless carried by birds or other animals. With good cone crops averaging once only every five years, pondero-

sa pine produces a limited amount of seed for new regeneration. When coupled with dry conditions the following spring, natural seedling establishment from existing pine trees is tenuous, and may take considerable time. Perhaps decades. High hopes for plentiful new seedlings from a strong pine cone crop in 2009 were dashed by one of the driest springs on record in 2010.

To facilitate establishment of a robust and genetically-adapted forest across the burn area, ponderosa pine seedlings are grown from seed that was collected on the Pike National Forest. Colorado is divided into seed transfer zones which reflect physiographic, climatic and geologic similarity. Seed collected from the same seed zone at a comparable elevation ($\pm 400'$) to the planting site is grown into healthy young seedlings by the U.S. Forest Service Bessey Nursery. The one-year old trees that are planted this spring should be producing their own cones within 15 years, bolstering establishment of the future landscape. FOMP plans to plant 200-300 trees this spring, and will be looking for enthusiastic volunteers to assist with this! Project date will depend on soil moisture conditions, but is tentatively scheduled for April 7 at 10:00 am, with a backup date of April 14.

Freeing The Fledgling Young Forest

It would take a keen eye to spot the thousands of young Douglas-fir seedlings that have established naturally across the burn area. A more moisture



loving species than ponderosa pine, Douglas fir is found primarily on north slopes and scattered ridges in the area. Fir can grow under heavier shade than ponderosa

pine, and has thus been able to germinate and establish under thickets of Gambel oak that have re-sprouted since the 1989 fire. Douglas fir has more frequent heavy cone crops at every 2-3 years. Its featherweight seeds can travel considerably farther on the wind, resulting in more widespread natural regeneration.

But oh that oak! While a mature landscape in this area boasts beautiful clumps of huge Gambel oak stems with a soft grassy understory interspersed with scattered yellow-barked ponderosa pine, most of these old oak stands were knocked back in the fire and replaced with dense impenetrable oak thickets. These have proliferated greatly in the last 20 years. Although Gambel oak will always be an integral part of this ecosystem, much of this juvenile oak will eventually succeed to conifers. *Eventually* is the key word here. In the meantime, it will likely choke out at least half of the hopeful young Douglas-fir (and a few scattered young pines), significantly

RESTORING THE FOREST— (CONT.)

slowing natural succession. Many of these seedlings would have soon succumbed due to the overtopping brush, with annual terminal growth decreasing to just an inch in some cases.

Our job here is to cut back just enough of the competing oak to give these young seedlings a fighting chance. Focusing on



Heidi & Jerry McClure put a protective mesh around a new seedling.

oak stems that most compromise sunlight, we exercise care in scattering cut brush to address aesthetic and fuel load concerns. A passerby would have to look long and hard to notice where this activity has taken place. The occasional old-growth oak pockets that survived the fire are a treasured part of the landscape, and would not be affected by this project. But there is no shortage of second-growth young oak, claiming a vast majority of the 1,000-acre burn area.

Volunteers are needed to help to release these seedlings. It is hard work but a lot of fun – akin to a treasure hunt. Very tangible and rewarding, one can almost sense the new lease on life realized by the handsome young seedling seeing the sunlight for the first time in years. We

plan to release seedlings on our monthly Tuesday work evenings starting in May, in addition to a Saturday or two this spring if interest warrants.



Nancy & Hermann Spielkamp work with Marianne & Dave Larivee

For more information on reforestation projects in the Preserve, please contact info@fomp.org. Watch for FOMP emails to see when various projects will be taking place.

MONUMENT SCOUT TROOP 17 & USFS TRAIL 715

by Jon Nordby

Despite the abundance of trails we enjoy and maintain in the Monument Preserve, only USFS Trail 715 is officially recognized on official Pike National Forest maps. The official trailhead is just a few hundred yards inside the gate at Schilling and Lindbergh, where TR 715 begins a meandering path that heads generally West towards Mount Herman before heading South out of the 1000 acres that comprise the Preserve. It's journey continues South, staying below Mt Herman Road, before climbing steeply West up the North Beaver creek drainage under the power lines. Finally crossing Mt Herman Road (MHR), the trail heads back toward Palmer Lake through Limbaugh Canyon, looping around the Front of Mount Herman back to preserve.

Trail 715 is rugged, and purposely unimproved to retain that feel. Equestrians are common on the ride "Around the Mountain", and are largely responsible for the

early route. Runners and hikers have always been frequent users, and mountain bikers are now enjoying the challenge. This is a challenging trail, with many rock and root obstacles known to pull a shoe off a horse and scrape up hocks, turn an ankle on a distance runner, and rip a derailleur off a mountain bike while flipping the rider over the bars. The challenge is the purpose of this trail, but as waist-deep erosion ruts formed over the years, it became clear we had to step in.



Tony Mazingo works on his project

FOMP has worked on 715 extensively to prevent deterioration of the trail while preserving the "unimproved" and remote experience this trail provides. We strive to leave natural obstacles in the trail bed, plan reroutes that are maintainable

while still challenging, and trim oak back in a way to where trail-use won't widen

the bed. I think we've mostly met that goal, for there are 1000's of hours invested in that trail over the past decade from volunteers comprised of school groups, church groups, USFS personnel and firefighters, corporate employees, and local businesses.

One group in particular, Troop 17 of the Boy Scouts of America, has made an enormous impact on this trail over the past 10 years, implementing 9 Eagle Scout



Zach Newton and his crew work on USFS Trail 715

projects extending from the trailhead, over into the Limbaugh section of trail.

Upcoming newsletters will provide a brief history on various Eagle Scout projects devoted to maintaining this special trail.



**FRIENDS OF
MONUMENT PRESERVE**

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Monument, CO 80132
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www.fomp.org

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*Have a computer?
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membership using
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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

At 7:00 PM on Tuesday, March 13, 2012, FOMP will be holding its annual membership meeting and Board of Directors elections. The purpose of this meeting is to elect a governing board to direct the activities of FOMP and act as your representatives to interface with the community and the USFS. If you or someone you know is interested in a board position, or just want to be more involved in defining our goals and operational plans, please plan on attending. The meeting is held in the classroom in the Fire Center Administration area. Follow the Mt. Herman Road and take the first left after it turns to dirt, and continue into the parking area. The classroom is the first building on the right. Only active FOMP members are eligible to vote, so plan on renewing your membership either prior to or at the meeting itself.

MEMBERSHIP FORM



**FRIENDS OF
MONUMENT PRESERVE**

Become a member of the Friends of Monument Preserve.

As a member of the Friends of Monument Preserve, you will help fund trail maintenance, educational programs, volunteer events and more!

Make your tax deductible donation to

Friends of Monument Preserve
PO Box 634
Monument, CO 80132

Annual Memberships

Individual \$15 _____
Family \$25 _____
Business/Sponsor \$100 _____
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Name _____
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Renew or join using Google Checkout at: www.fomp.org

* used for newsletters and event reminders



Your Interests: Hiking _____ Biking _____
Horseback riding _____ Fishing _____
Nature/Ecology _____ Archeology _____