



# New Mexico News



Cuba's Seniors Walking Group takes on new walking paths.  
Photo credit: Anna Schulte

## Recent Successes

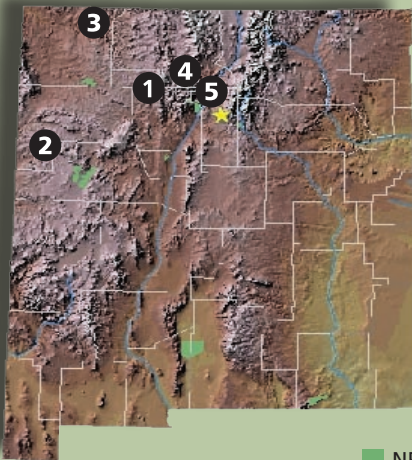
### Step Into Cuba makes Giant Strides!

The Step Into Cuba Alliance, just 1½ years old, already is making a difference in the village of Cuba, NM. In 2009, alliance members coordinated the construction of three loop walking trails, started trail-walking groups, and planted hundreds of plants and trees to improve St. Francis of Assisi Park. They also created awareness of and helped plan the Continental Divide Trail route through Cuba, and they mobilized citizens to deal with pedestrian safety along a busy and potentially dangerous federal highway route that bisects the town.

The Nacimiento Medical Foundation, a local non-profit group and the alliance's coordinating agency, has received a Healthy Communities grant from the New Mexico Department of Health. The funds will be used to support Step into Cuba for five years.

One of the Alliance's key partners, the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (PRC), has obtained grant support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide technical assistance for project direction and guidance to Step Into Cuba in the areas of policy develop-

continued on page 4



■ NPS Unit  
★ State Capital

## PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2010

### CURRENT PROJECTS

- 1. Step Into Cuba**  
Nacimiento Medical Foundation
- 2. Zuni Mountain Trails**  
McKinley County
- 3. Animas River Trail**  
Aztec Trails & Open Space Committee
- 4. Merced del Pueblo Abiquiu Open Space**  
Merced del Pueblo Abiquiu Land Grant Association
- 5. Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area**  
Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area, Inc.

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

### ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

# Current Projects cont.

## 1. Step Into Cuba

Project Partner: Nacimiento Medical Foundation  
RTCA Contact: Attila Bality  
Location: Village of Cuba

### Project Goal

Step Into Cuba is an ambitious effort to use the area's remarkable natural environment to create walkways and trails, encourage and engage individuals and organizations in a shared goal of healthy exercise, and develop and improve St. Francis of Assisi Park as a central trailhead and recreation destination. Trail linkages from town to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail are also being planned.

### RTCA Role

RTCA is developing a process for public input and guidance on Cuba area walking and hiking resources as well as engaging Federal, State, County, and Village partners in creation of a trails plan. RTCA will help local partners explore the creation of a Youth Corps to support trail related projects.

*“Thanks to RTCA guidance, we now have a blueprint for the multiple aspects of the Healthy Communities program.”*

- Anna Hargreaves, CDC Healthy Communities Program Coordinator, NM Department of Health

## 2. Zuni Mountain Trails

Project Partner: Zuni Mountain Trails Partnership, Gallup Trails 2010  
RTCA Contact: Attila Bality  
Location: Gallup & Grants, NM

### Project Goal

Abandoned logging roads and rail-bed spurs throughout the Zuni Mountain Range of the Cibola National Forest are ideal for re-use as hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. Trail connections are planned throughout the 2400 square



Riders enjoy fall along Quaking Aspen Trail, McGaffey, NM. Photo credit: Bill Sibersma, Gallup Trails 2010

mile mountain range as well as over 140 miles of single track trails in and around the communities of McGaffey and Twin Springs. Additionally, forest restoration projects have been identified for three priority areas.

### RTCA Role

The Zuni Mountain Trail Partnership is asking RTCA to assist in strengthening the collaborative effort to achieve community-set and regional goals; assess trail related resources and develop conceptual plans for trail systems; and provide support in creating a broad based civic engagement plan.

## 3. Animas River Trail

Project Partner: Aztec Trails & Open Space  
RTCA Contact: Attila Bality  
Location: Aztec, NM

### Project Goal

Aztec Ruins National Monument, the City of Aztec, and Aztec Trails & Open Space (ATOS) have developed a concept plan for a trail system linking the community's major assets -- Animas River, the National Monument, Historic Main Street, and two large recreational sport complexes in the City of Aztec. This phase of the plan will develop three miles of trail



Trail surveying along the Animas. Photo credit: Aztec Trails and Open Space, Inc.

# Current Projects cont.

along the Animas River connecting Riverside Park to Aztec Ruins National Monument and provide a pedestrian gateway to the National Monument.

## RTCA Role

RTCA will support the Aztec Trails & Open Space Committee with a public consensus building process for extending the Animas River Trail to Aztec Ruins National Monument. RTCA will also provide technical assistance on trail design issues and accessing rights of way for public use.

## 4. Merced del Pueblo Abiquiu Open Space

Project Partner: Merced del Pueblo Abiquiu Land Grant Association

RTCA Contact: Attila Bality, Kathy Faz

Location: Village of Abiquiu, Northern NM

### Project Goal

Develop a 32-acre parcel of land within the boundaries of the Merced into a series of trails and park space for conservation and recreational activities while also connecting the communities' various natural and cultural resources. Create and maintain riparian habitats and develop outdoor education opportunities to promote land and water resource stewardship.

### RTCA Role

Work with the Merced del Pueblo Abiquiu to identify opportunities for engaging and educating youth on resource conservation and open space design within 10 acres of the 32-acre parcel of land. Organize and facilitate community input workshops on the open space design with the Rio Arriba county communities, as well as with key agencies at the state and federal level. Identify state, federal or non-profit organizations to organize training workshops on open space design for youth organizations within Rio Arriba County. Identify funding opportunities or resources to complete river restoration and land maintenance.



TorC volunteers construct new trail.  
Photo credit: Merry Jo Fahl

## 5. Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area

Project Partner: Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area, Inc.

RTCA Contact: Attila Bality, Kathy Faz  
Location: Rio Grande corridor in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba & Taos Counties

### Project Goal

Enhancement of local recreation, tourism, agriculture, and economic development resources in the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area.

*“RTCA helped us figure out our civic engagement priorities. They got us back on track.”*

- Glenna Dean, Associate Director, Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area, Inc

### RTCA Role

Provide administrative support for task agreement(s) and assist the NRGNHA, Inc. with their management plan public input process and development with the NRGNHA board. Identify youth organizations and program opportunities and funding sources that would support the mission of the NRGNHA focused on traditional cultural practices and conservation of natural resources. Assist with mapping the existing heritage sites and opportunities within the NRGNHA and design and facilitate workshops. Create partnerships with cultural groups that are not predominately represented within the NRGNHA to obtain feedback on how to interpret their story. Conduct a recreational inventory and recreational gap analysis within the NRGNHA to identify existing and potential opportunities for public enjoyment of the natural, cultural, archeological, architectural, and historical resources of the heritage area.



Youth recording petroglyphs in the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area.  
Photo credit: The Archaeological Conservancy and the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project

## We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.

### Attila Bality

505.270.5920

attila\_bality@nps.gov

### Katherine Faz

512.245.7263

kathy\_faz@nps.gov

## 2009 Nationwide Partnership Success

3,441 Miles of Trail Developed

2,664 Miles of River Conserved

87,385 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

97% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at

[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

## Recent Successes cont.



ment, implementation and advocacy, community coalition building, pedestrian safety, safe routes to schools, and playground safety. PRC staff will also evaluate Step Into Cuba activities. With additional funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Kids Healthy Communities grant program, PRC staff will work with Step Into Cuba partners to enhance the focus on children and improve access to fresh healthy foods as well as safe places to walk and play.

Village doctors and other health-care workers began the Prescription Trails program in November of 2009. The area's health-care providers intend to refer as many of their patients as possible to local "walking champions" to develop personalized walking programs.

RTCA has worked closely as a partner of the Step Into Cuba Alliance to plan alliance activities. RTCA also provided technical trail design expertise, coordinated a community walkability workshop, and helped plan improvements at St. Francis Park to emphasize connecting children to nature and increasing physical activity among local residents.

Step into Cuba promotes healthy physical activity by building sidewalks, paths, trails, social support, and opportunities for lifestyle change. The alliance, guided by a partnership of organizations and individuals, is coordinated by the Nacimiento Medical Foundation. Its vision is to create a "greener," healthier, and more pedestrian-oriented community by providing extraordinary opportunities for walking and hiking on the scenic surrounding federal lands. The alliance website is: [www.stepintocuba.org](http://www.stepintocuba.org).

## Healing Waters Trail Breaks Ground

With the help of a fire crew from the Gila National Forest's Black Range Ranger District, Healing Waters Trail volunteers constructed a new trail to the top of Carrie Tingley Hill, the most natural part of the Healing Waters Trail. The new segment of trail links the Rio Grande wetlands to Veterans Memorial Park. The new work completes a three-mile trail loop, and interpretive and way-finding signs are being developed with a New Mexico Recreational Trails Grant. Earlier in 2009, a Student Conservation Association work crew from Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge helped local volunteers and school children remove vegetation from the river's warm-water wetlands.

In addition, a master's degree candidate from the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning finished a cultural landscapes report for the Healing Waters Trail. This report lays the foundation for further interpretation along this route.