



THE FIELD OF VIEW (F.O.V.)  
National Public Observatory Newsletter  
**“Where the Public Meets the Stars”**

Astronomy education, dark skies and quality experiences for ALL!!  
www.Astro-npo.org

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STARS-N-PARKS PROGRAMS IN SEVEN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Winter 2005

## NPO receives New Mexico State Parks Reach for the Stars grant

By Jessica J. Savage

It would be another lunar cycle before it could be fully appreciated, but the observatory and its telescope, capable of slewing to any one of 145,000 objects currently veiled under a canopy of clouds, stood humbly at attention while receiving a heaping of praise.

“Literally and figuratively, we’re trying to reach for the stars,” said Director of State Parks Dave Simon at the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony to unveil the City of Rocks State Park Observatory.

Speaking before a crowd of 150 park visitors that included a boy scout troop from Alamogordo, and accompanied by public officials from nearby Silver City and an entourage of state park officials from Santa Fe, Simon was referring to the State Park initiative “Reach for the Stars,” that will be it’s new vehicle for bringing astronomy and dark sky education to visitors.

Although the initiative was underplayed at the ceremony, except for the new sweatshirts bearing the Reach for the Stars logo, what park officials were keeping under their hats was how they planned to allocate nearly \$70,000 in funding approved in the last legislative session designated for astronomy education, light pollution control and astronomy equipment maintenance.

A few weeks later, officials with the National Public Observatory learned that over \$10,000 of their (continued)

Reach for the Stars proposal to the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, the agency in charge of state parks, would be funded under the initiative.

“We’re really excited,” said NPO President John Gilkison about receiving the funding. “We think it will open the opportunity for bigger grants in the future.”

In the meantime, the funding means the Stars-N-Parks astronomy outreach program can expand after having to be cut back when funding from the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium under their public outreach grant ran out and was not replenished.

Grant funding allows the NPO to pay program presenters a fee and mileage, which acts as an incentive for presenters to travel the extra distance to the state park month after month to conduct an astronomy program.

The NPO can now add programs at Oliver Lee S. P. and Elephant Butte S. P. to the schedule, and conduct a monthly program at City of Rocks S. P., bringing the total number of parks on the schedule to seven.

New presenter Sally Allen will be conducting programs in the Deming/Columbus area at Rock Hound S. P. and Pancho Villa S. P., while John Pijawka, who has relocated to the Alamogordo area, will conduct programs at Oliver Lee S. P.

The NPO is also designing an evaluation instrument that will be given to program attendees to receive feedback on various aspects of the program and track attendance.

Not having to conduct every Stars-N-Parks program means Gilkison can now focus on some of the other aspects of the Reach for the Stars program that were entrusted to the NPO.

Gilkison will conduct a before and after light pollution survey of Pancho Villa S. P. He will make recommendations to reduce light pollution at the park, which will help state parks to be more in compliance (cont. on page 2)



**Grand Opening CoR SP Observatory 10/01/05.  
Left to right, Steve Cary, Dave Simon, State Representative, Ken Abalos, John Gilkison, and the Mayor Pro Tem of Silver City.**

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with the Dark Sky Protection Act. After the recommendations are implemented he will reevaluate the park and report his findings to state park officials.

Gilkison has also been designated as the go-to person for astronomy equipment maintenance and purchase recommendations. Besides the 14-inch Meade LX200 telescope at City of Rocks S. P., the state park's has an eight-inch Meade LX200 at Living Desert S. P. and an eight-inch Orion Intelliscope used throughout Region 3.

Already Gilkison has been working on hooking up the imaging devices that will be used for video astronomy at City of Rocks S. P. and will use two monitors. He's also looking into wireless video that can be broadcast on the internet.

Having extra money from presenting also allows presenters to make improvements in the astronomy equipment they have available to use at programs. Matt Wilson, who presents at City of Rocks S. P. has purchased a pair of right-angle 88 mm binoculars that the public can look through while others are waiting in line to look through the new telescope.

Receiving the funding means that state park officials recognize the work NPO has done that furthers its own astronomy mission within the state parks. "We have state parks excited about this," Gilkison said.

None of this would be possible without the collaboration between the parks and its partners like the NPO, said Chief Naturalist and Natural Resource Planner Steve Cary.

"We have the facilities and you give the programs and maintain equipment," he said. "I look forward very much to advancing the partnership between our two organizations."

Yet the work of abating light pollution and holding public outreach astronomy programs has just begun. (continued)

**The North Camp Site at City of Rocks State Park which will be the site for the Spring 2006 Southern New Mexico Star Party scheduled to run from April 20 to April 23rd.**



A beautiful Sunspot group that had rotated around the Sun's limb on September 16th 2005 (105 Maksutov).

"Much remains to be done in the way of protecting our night skies and helping the public to see the wonders that are up there," said Cary in an email correspondence.

Other parks will receive telescopes – the next one being Clayton Lake S. P. – and three other organizations will fulfill other aspects of Reach for the Stars and hold programs in other parts of the state.

"I hope the collaboration on which we're embarking," said Cary, "will accelerate the pace and expand the breadth of that progress for all New Mexicans."

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The planet Mars as seen on December 2nd 2005, imaged by Matt Wilson with a LPI imager through a ten inch F/10 SCT Meade.



## New Members and Renewals in the NPO

### New Members of the National Public Observatory

Sally Allen of Deming, New Mexico  
 Bill Cooper of Deming, New Mexico  
 Gail Clymia of New York, New York  
 James Eaves of Emporia, Kansas  
 M Southworth of Las Cruces, New Mexico  
 Bill & Esther Wycoff of Deming, New Mexico

### Membership Renewals in the NPO

Lynford Ames of Las Cruces, New Mexico  
 Bobby Franzoy of Hatch, New Mexico  
 Susan Harder of East Hampton, New York  
 William & Henrietta Hovarter of Silver City, NM

### Winter 2006 Star-n-Parks Schedule for the National Public Observatory

Fall 2005 SS = Sunset, NT = Nautical Twilight

1: Saturday January 21, 2006 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 5:25 PM, NT 6:35 PM Mars and Saturn, Aquila to Cancer, NGC-253, Orion, and M-31 prominent, program ends at 8:05 PM. Jeff Jenkins

2: Saturday January 21, 2006 Pancho Villa SP, SS 5:25 PM, NT 6:35 PM Mars and Saturn, Aquila to Cancer, NGC-253, Orion, and M-31 prominent, program ends at 8:05 PM. S Allen

3: Saturday January 28, 2006 City of Rocks SP, SS 5:30 PM, NT 6:40 PM Mars and Saturn, Aquila to Cancer, NGC-253, Orion, and M-31 prominent, program ends at 8:05 PM. Matt Wilson

4: Saturday January 28, 2006 Rock Hound SP, SS 5:30 PM, NT 6:40 PM Mars and Saturn, Aquila to Cancer, NGC 253, Orion, and M-31 prominent, programs ends at 8:10 PM. Sally Allen

5: Saturday February 4, 2006 Leasburg Dam S P, SS 5:40 PM, NT 6:50 PM six day old Moon, Mars near M-45, & Saturn in Cancer, Pisces to Leo, Orion near the meridian, Milky Way NE to SW, program ends at 8:20 PM. Jeff Jenkins

6: Saturday February 4, 2006 Elephant Butte Lake S P, SS 5:40 PM, NT 6:50 PM six day old Moon, Mars near M-45, & Saturn in Cancer, Pisces to Leo, Orion near the meridian, Milky Way NE to SW, program ends at 8:20 PM. John Gilkison

7: Saturday February 18, 2006 City of Rocks S P, SS 5:40 PM, NT 6:50 PM Mercury, Mars near M-45, & Saturn in Cancer, Pisces to Leo, Orion near the meridian, Milky Way NE to SW, program ends at 8:20 PM Matt Wilson

Winter Stars-n-Parks schedule cont. upper right

### Winter Stars-n-Parks Schedule continued

8: Saturday February 25, 2006 Rock Hound S P, SS 5:55 PM, NT 7:05 PM Mercury, Mars, & Saturn, Pisces to Leo, Gemini overhead, Canis Major approaching the meridian, program ends at 8:35 PM. Sally Allen

9: Saturday March 4, 2006 Leasburg Dam S P, SS 6:00 PM, NT 7:10 PM five day old Moon, Mars, Saturn, Aires to Virgo, Ursa Major standing on its tail, program ends at 8:40 PM. Jeff Jenkins



**The newest NPO Presenter Sally Allen from Deming will handle programming at Rock Hound State Park, and Pancho Villa State Park. Sally is standing beside her 8 inch Orion Dobsonian outfitted with a full aperture glass solar filter.**

**Annual Membership Application or Renewal:**  
Please circle one of the following:

|                              | Member | Sponsor | Supporter | Patron  | Lifetime |
|------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Individual                   | \$35   | \$50    | \$100     | \$400   | \$600    |
| Family                       | \$50   | \$100   |           |         |          |
| Student or Retiree           | \$20   | n/a     | n/a       | n/a     | n/a      |
| Astronomy clubs < 80 members | \$50   | n/a     | n/a       | n/a     | n/a      |
| Libraries                    | \$50   | n/a     | n/a       | n/a     | n/a      |
| Corporate & Government       | \$100  | \$200   | \$400     | \$1,500 | \$2,500  |

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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL PUBLIC OBSERVATORY PROJECT**

*Tens of thousands of people visit major U.S. research astronomical observatories every year. These research facilities do not advertise, and quite altruistically, set aside monies and time from their limited budgets to accommodate the public. Many people travel great distances for the opportunity to observe through a world-class telescope but due to the high cost of telescope time, this generally is not feasible. Where observatories have been able to set aside a night for public observing, it is often booked up well in advance.*

*While some upscale observatory/lodge facilities have been developed, none have been established to reach families or individuals looking for an intimate public park/camping experience with the proper telescopes, facilities, and knowledgeable tour guides.*

*The National Public Observatory, Inc. has been established to provide this kind of facility and we need your help.*

*Please join the National Public Observatory or make your tax-deductible contribution today!*