



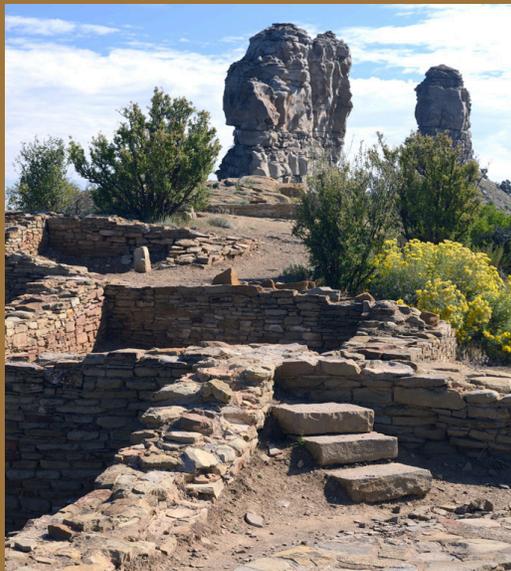
CHIMNEY ROCK

INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER



WHERE CULTURE IS THE ADVENTURE



WELCOME TO THE 2026 SEASON



As the desert sky shifts from deep indigo to warm sandstone hues, Chimney Rock once again welcomes visitors to experience one of the most sacred and significant ancestral sites in the Southwest.

Perched high above the Piedra River Valley, Chimney Rock National Monument offers more than breath taking views. It is a place of story, astronomy, community, and living heritage.

The Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA) is proud to support guided tours, educational programming, preservation efforts, and community engagement throughout the 2026 season. Whether you are joining us for a lecture, volunteering your time, or hiking to the Great House Pueblo, your participation helps preserve this remarkable cultural landscape.

We invite you to explore, learn, and connect.

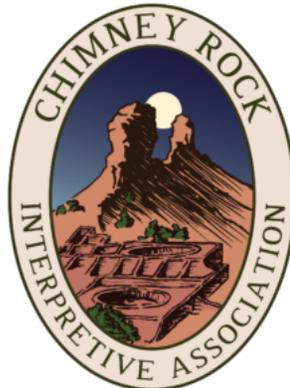
Volunteer Information Sessions

Volunteering at Chimney Rock offers a meaningful way to connect with history, community, and landscape. We are currently welcoming new volunteers for the 2026 season.

March 20, 2026: Bayfield Library on Friday
395 Bayfield Center Dr, Bayfield, CO 81122
10:00 AM–12:00 PM

March 24, 2026: Ignacio Community Library
470 Goddard Ave, Ignacio, CO 81137
10:00 AM-1:00 PM

April 18, 2026: Bayfield Library
395 Bayfield Center Dr, Bayfield, CO 81122
10:00 AM–12:00 PM



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States Forest Service, Susan Yalom

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHIMNEY ROCK INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION BOARD



CRIA is gearing up for Chimney Rock National Monument seasonal opening on May 15th.

This time of the year CRIA actively recruits volunteers for interpretive programs and visitor services at the Monument. Recruitment events are being finalized for Pagosa Springs, Bayfield, and Ignacio to engage new volunteers and highlight their vital role.

CRIA extends deep gratitude to the planning and implementation team: Denise Fisk, Joanne Lucarillo, Bernadette Sikes, Kathleen Thompson, Gloria Bissmeyer, Ernie O'Toole, and Susan Yalom.

Internal preparations are underway for the annual volunteer orientation. This year's two-day training is scheduled for Friday, April 17th, at the Community United Methodist Church (administrative/interpretive training), and Saturday, April 18th, on-site at the Monument (hands-on training/familiarization).

In other news, CRIA's educational outreach is expanding with an invitation to speak at the Ignacio Chamber of Commerce on March 4th. CRIA especially thanks Tony Aldwell for agreeing to represent the association and present at this important community event and to Denise Fisk for inviting CRIA as a speaker.

Jill Sutton, CRIA Board President

Education & Interpretation in Action

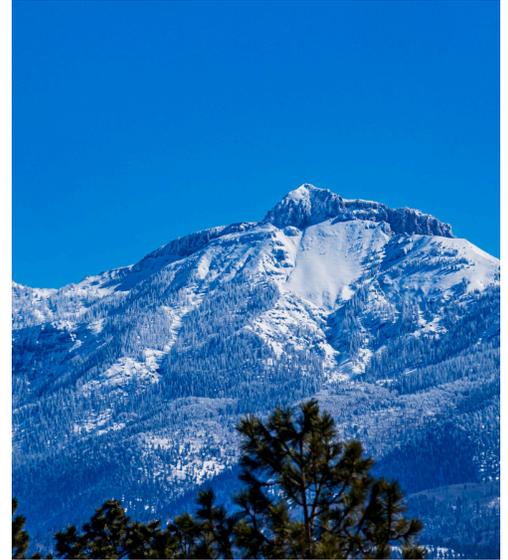
- Chimney Rock is more than a monument. It is a classroom without walls.
- Astronomical alignments and lunar cycles
- Engineering of the Great House Pueblo
- Trade routes and regional networks
- Cultural continuity and ancestral traditions

Our Impact

Last season, thousands of visitors experienced guided interpretation, educational programs were delivered, volunteers contributed hundreds of service hours, and preservation initiatives continued through collaborative partnerships.

Every ticket purchased, every donation made, and every volunteer hour strengthens our ability to steward this sacred place.

PROGRAMS AND TOURS FOR THE 2026 SEASON



A Tour of Two Trails
Sunrise at Chimney Rock
A Day in the Life of the Ancients
Birding at Chimney Rock
Full Moon
Flute Music at Twilight
Lecture Series
Life at Chimney Rock
Night Sky
Summer Solstice/Autumnal Equinox
Youth Workshops
School Week

Note: The programs shown in **red** are free to the public, but like all of CRIA's programs, they require funding to organize and support them; donations to CRIA are more than welcome!

Support the Mission

- The Chimney Rock Interpretive Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the preservation, interpretation, and education efforts at Chimney Rock National Monument.
- Educational programming
- Volunteer training
- Site preservation initiatives
- Community outreach
- Special events and lectures

2026 Lecture Series

Tuesday, May 19, 2026: David Bouquet, "Southwestern Native Rock Art"

Tuesday, June 23, 2026: Andy Gulliford: "The Native Americans of the Chimney Rock Area"

Tuesday, August 11, 2026: John Ghahate: "The Pueblo Revolt"

Tuesday, October 6, 2026: John Kappelman: "The Dating Game: Archeological Dating Methods"

See details about the lectures on our website by clicking [HERE](#).

All lectures will take place at the Community United Methodist Church in Pagosa Springs, CO, located at 434 Lewis St, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147.

CONTINUING EDUCATION



In addition to the Certification Process, CRIA will be instituting a “Continuing Education” Program to help us improve as volunteers, to broaden our knowledge of Chimney Rock and Puebloan culture, and to keep us all current on changing interpretations from the academic literature and other Puebloan sites. This program is focused on Guides, Hosts, and Interpreters, but will be open to all volunteers and staff. The Continuing Education program will be presented at least once every season preferably just before season opening. The Continuing Education Program will be presented in modules and will likely include exciting field trips to other Puebloan sites.

Examples of planned modules/topics could include:

- A review of updates to the Core Curriculum and other changes in interpretation from the academic literature
- Learnings from the previous season about how to improve the visitor experience
- Native American speakers on topics like cultural sensitivity and modern Puebloan cultures
- Additions to the new CRIA office information library
- Share a general topic about archeology, anthropology, archeoastronomy, etc.
- Share some aspect of the natural setting (e.g. plants, animals, geology, astronomy, etc.)
- An optional field trip at least once a year to other Puebloan sites
- Volunteers can also request topics that they would like to hear about and/or give presentations on subjects of interest.

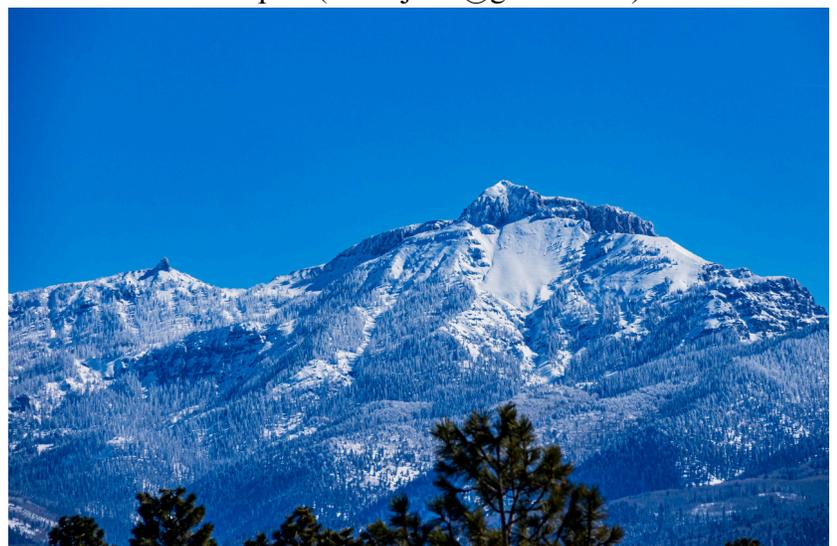
These sessions will be recorded for those unable to attend the live on line sessions.

The Certification Committee will present the details of the certification process at the Annual Orientation on April 17th. The Continuing Education Program will be held sometime between May 4th and May 14th, exact date and time not yet scheduled.

For further information or questions contact

Ernie O’toole (eotoole1@yahoo.com) or

David Bouquet (damaajo22@gmail.com).



FOREST SERVICE



Hello CRIA,

We're busy planning for the 2026 season here at the Forest Service. We were able to hire seasonals again and we're very excited. The window for applications close on 2/27. We're hopeful that some enthusiastic and engaging folks apply for the Forest Service Chimney Rock ranger positions. We'll know more soon and will share news with you when we've got it.

Thanks, as always, for your partnership.
San Juan National Forest
Forest Service

San Juan National Forest Seasonal Hiring Window Is Open

Durango, Colo., Feb 23, 2026 — The San Juan National Forest is now hiring seasonal employees for a variety of recreation positions on each district. The application window opened Feb. 20 with the majority of applications closing on March 3. We encourage local residents to apply.

Positions on the San Juan NF include front/back-country trail work, developed recreation maintenance, road construction/management, and visitor services administration. These positions have a flexible start/end date with a general window of employment between May-November. Qualified candidates must be able to perform manual labor, hike long distances, have a valid U.S. driver's license, and must be at least 18 years old.

All San Juan National Forest positions will be advertised on www.usajobs.gov. For more information on each position, please click on the link in the table and reach out to the hiring manager with position-specific questions. Our partners at [San Juan Mountains Association](#) and [Southwest Conservation Corps](#) are also hiring positions in partnership with the San Juan NF. These will be advertised and hired through their respective webpages.

These positions are in addition to seasonal fire hire events, already underway. Bringing on seasonal employees will help improve trails, campgrounds and facilities for safer, reliable and enjoyable recreation experiences for all.

How to Apply

Applicants must apply through USAJOBS.gov beginning Feb. 20 to be officially considered for these roles

Application periods, qualifications, and start dates vary by position. Applicants are encouraged to review job announcements carefully for deadlines and required materials.

Working for the Forest Service

To learn more about Forest Service careers, benefits and upcoming hiring events, visit fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/careers.

San Juan National Forest
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/sanjuan>
970-247-4874

RIVER TRIP WITH DR. ANDREW GULLIFORD

Dr. Andy Gulliford is a historian, author, and friend of CRIA who teaches history and environmental studies at Ft. Lewis College in Durango. Andy, you may recall was part of our “Lecture Series” last season when he gave a lecture on Bears Ears, based on his latest book, *Bears Ears: Landscape of Refuge and Resistance*. He is also scheduled to give another lecture for CRIA, “The Native American of Chimney Rock National Monument and the Four Corners Area” on Tuesday June 23rd at 6:00 PM at the Methodist Church’s Fellowship Hall.

Andy has asked me to see if there would be any interest from our volunteers in joining him on a four-day river trip down the San Juan River May 10th to May 14th. You will journey into the past for 4 days, immersed in the timeless solitude of the

San Juan River, led by PhD Historian Andrew Gulliford. Explore hidden ruins and ancient rock art panels, remnants of the ancestral Puebloan culture, accessible only from the river’s edge. Dr. Gulliford will bring to life the stories and history of the San Juan, revealing the rich tapestry of human presence that has graced these lands for centuries. For further details, cost, specifics, etc. go to <https://www.riversandruins.com/tour/4-day-river-trip-with-dr-gulliford>. I am seriously considering taking the trip and want to know if anybody else would be interested.

Ernie OToole eotoole1@yahoo.com



SCHOOL WEEK



School Week is Monday through Friday, May 5th through May 8th, and Monday through Wednesday, May 11th through 13th. There are five field trip reservations so far. Park Elementary 4th graders are coming on Thursday, May 7th, 56 students, from 9:45 to 1:00. Ignacio Youth Services are coming on Friday, May 8th, 6th – 9th grades, 10 students, from 11:00 to 3:30. Pagosa Elementary 3rd grades are coming on May 11th, 12th, and 13th. There is one class of 22 on the 11th, and two classes of 22 on the 12th and 13th. They are coming from 9:00 to 2:00 each day.

I have contacted the volunteers who helped last season. All volunteers are welcome. Except for Tour Guides, you don’t need any special training. It is a nice time to be at the site, before opening to the public.

We need lots of volunteers. Let me know if you would like to help.

Thanks, Susan Yalom

sueyal@yahoo.com

cell: 970-731-1091

Stay Connected

Chimney Rock Interpretive Association

P.O. Box 1662

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

www.ChimneyRockCo.org

DID YOU KNOW?

Since the discovery of Clovis projectile points in the 1930's, archaeologists maintained for decades that the earliest people in North America were the Clovis people. Their time of entry from Alaska into the US was thought to coincide with the opening of an ice-free corridor between the Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheets, around 13,000 years ago. However, beginning in the 1970's a number of archaeological sites have been dated to earlier than 13,000 years ago, especially in South America. An example is Monte Verde in Chile, which has been firmly dated to at least 18,000 years ago (recent work suggests that it is even much older than that). The Gault site in Texas has been dated to 26,500-19,000 years ago. A few years ago human footprints were discovered at White Sands National Park which were definitively dated to 21,000 to 23,000 years ago. These were mixed with tracks of now-extinct megafauna including the mammoth and giant sloth. This obviously raises a number of questions. How did they arrive when the ice sheets in Alaska were not open; the ice would have prevented overland travel. An alternative route down the Pacific coast has been proposed, although there is no hard evidence yet for this route. Another option being considered is that the initial entry occurred before the ice sheets closed.

Pueblo Indian Cookies

2 cups butter, softened
2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar, divided
2 large eggs
6 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
2 teaspoons anise seeds, crushed
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon

Beat butter at medium speed until creamy; gradually add 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar, beating mixture well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition.

Combine flour and next 3 ingredients; add to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture.

Divide dough in half; roll each half to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thickness on a well-floured surface. Cut with a cookie cutter and place on a lightly greased cookie sheet.

Combine remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over cookies.

Bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes.
Yield: about 8 dozen.

Gloria Trujillo - Santa Fe, New Mexico
Southern Living 1995 Annual Recipes Cookbook.



Volunteers at the February Bake Sale at City Market in Pagosa Springs



Individuals learning about volunteer opportunities.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: ERNIE O'TOOLE

BY JEANNIE MURRAY



Currently there are 81 CRIA volunteers. Many of us only know the folks who work the same day at the same place. As a Plaza Host I have met people who work in the gift shop, and share Plaza host duties with me. There are many others I don't know but would like to know. We plan to ask 4 questions of one volunteer each month and highlight that person in our monthly newsletters.

Many people know Ernie O'Toole. He is a large presence at CRIA, leading tours up the Great House trail, reinstating the CRIA lecture series, as a second time board member, and much more. I spoke with Ernie on the phone and he answered a few questions for us.

Tell us a little of your life history.

Ernie was born and raised in Boston, MA. He spent 4 years in the US Air Force, 3 of those years were spent in Germany. After separating from the Air Force, he obtained an engineering degree and moved to Denver. He went to work for Lockheed Martin, working on space exploration spacecraft. Some of his projects were the Viking Project, the first soft landing on Mars; Voyager which was the first spacecraft to travel to interstellar space; and the Magellan spacecraft which mapped the planet, Venus.

He retired from Lockheed Martin at the age of 52. He wasn't finished learning and returned to school to obtain a Bachelor's in biology from Metro State Denver, and a Master's in ecology from University of Tennessee.

Ernie moved to North Park, Colorado and enjoyed his work as a wildlife biologist for the US Forest Service and several private companies. He built an off grid solar powered house in North Park and enjoyed the peace and serenity of the woods for 21 years. The closest town was Walden and that was quite a way away.

When did you move to Pagosa Springs?

Ernie left North Park in 2014 - he found that living off the grid was "too tough for an old man". One of his two daughters lived in Durango. He visited the area and decided to check out Pagosa. He liked Pagosa and purchased his town home in 2015.

Since he did not know anyone in Pagosa at the time and wanted to meet people, he joined several local groups, one of which was CRIA. He started at CRIA at the same time as Pat and Holly Hasenbuehler, who are still friends and still volunteering at Chimney Rock. He also met Joan Ward at the CRIA orientation and was immediately smitten.

They have been together for 10+ years and are still going strong.

What do you like best about volunteering at Chimney Rock?

Ernie loves giving Tours. "I am so enthralled with the ancestral Puebloans; I love telling the story of Chimney

Rock and the Chaco Culture." He is always excited to give tours and is always willing to add just a few more people to his tours.

Ernie currently serves as vice president of the CRIA Board of Trustees. This is his second time serving on the board.

What do you do when you are not volunteering at Chimney Rock?

Ernie has retired many times from various jobs and volunteer positions. He just retired in February as a volunteer with the Archuleta County sheriff's office. Some of his jobs were as volunteer patrol deputy, verifying VIN numbers for the county, and serving court papers throughout the county.

Ernie still works on CRIA matters even when he is not at Chimney Rock giving tours and answering questions. He resurrected the CRIA lecture series beginning in 2024. Last year he arranged six lectures, all associated with Chimney Rock and the ancestral Puebloans. They are available to view on the CRIA YouTube channel. He has four lectures scheduled for 2026. Don't forget to come to the lecture series. The schedule is listed on the CRIA website.

Ernie and the Certification Committee have developed a process to certify various positions at Chimney Rock. Certification will ensure that all Tour Guides, Interpreters, and Hosts are relaying a consistent and up-to-date narrative about the Chimney Rock Story. Certification will add significant professionalism to each role.

He has produced the "Field Guide to the Flora of Chimney Rock National Monument" plant guide which is available to download from our website. He is currently working on a more comprehensive "Plant List" for the Monument.

Ernie O'Toole has not slowed down much at age 84. We hope that he will continue to help lead the way for CRIA and share his extensive knowledge of the Ancestral Puebloans. Thank you for sharing some of your life story with us!

Tribal Partnerships

Since Chimney Rock was designated a National Monument by Presidential Proclamation 2012, the San Juan National Forest consults and partners with many Native American Tribes and Pueblos to manage the monument, including restoration. In August 2024, the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (a corps program that partners with tribal communities and land managers to accomplish projects based in historical preservation and traditional knowledge) conducted a structural stabilization project at Chimney Rock National Monument.

The Chimney Rock area holds deep spiritual significance for modern pueblo and tribal communities. Today, descendants of the Ancestral Puebloans, Navajo, Jicarilla Apache and Ute return to this important place of cultural continuity for ceremonial and traditional purposes. The area is also an important source of traditional cultural materials that are collected by tribal members for food and medicine. Chimney Rock National Monument is managed to protect and preserve access by tribal members for traditional cultural, spiritual, food and medicine gathering purposes, consistent with the purposes of the monument, to the maximum extent permitted by law.

The San Juan National Forest ensures that the hunting rights of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe within the exterior boundaries of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, including lands within the Monument, are upheld. The San Juan National Forest also ensures that the hunting and fishing rights of the 1873 Brunot Agreement are upheld on public lands under its management jurisdiction, including those lands within the Monument.

Tribes with ancestral and cultural ties to the Chimney Rock National Monument landscape:

Kewa Pueblo Pueblo of Santa Ana Pueblo de Cochiti Pueblo of Santa Clara Pueblo of Acoma
Pueblo of Taos Pueblo of Isleta Pueblo of Tesuque Pueblo of Jemez Pueblo of Zia
Pueblo of Laguna Zuni Tribe of the Zuni Reservation Pueblo of Nambé Ohkay Owingeh
Pueblo of Picuris Hopi Tribe Pueblo of Pojoaque Jicarilla Apache Nation Pueblo of San Felipe
Navajo Nation Pueblo of San Ildefonso
Southern Ute Indian Tribe Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray Reservation
Pueblo of Sandia Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/sanjuan/recreation/chimney-rock-national-monument>

SUPPORT THE MISSION



Designation 2025

www.ChimneyRockCo.org

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To book and see a full listing of tour/program times and dates, scan the QR Code.



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