

# Filling the gaps

During the government shutdown, volunteers are stepping in to help keep NM recreation areas running



COURTESY OF ANGEL FIRE RESORT NORDIC CENTER Skiers glide along a trail at Angel Fire Nordic Center. Most cross - country cross-country skiing sites in the state are open.



JOURNAL PHOTO A sign at the Ellis Trailhead off N. M. 536 solicits donations to help Sandia Nordic keep parking lots cleared.

BY NANCY TIPTON OF THE JOURNAL

Across the country volunteers are stepping up to assume trash pickup, snowplow operation and other tasks left undone at public recreation sites as a result as the partial government shutdown. And New Mexico is no different. Amid one of the better snow years in recent memory, Sandia Nordic cross-country ski club, which grooms trails between 10 K and Ellis trailheads along N. M. 536 ( Crest road ) is keeping the parking lot open and the trails ready for skiers." I was up there last weekend and not only do we have tons of snow, I have never seen so many people out playing in the

snow," said Scott Dietrich, president of Sandia Nordic. A sign has been posted at the Ellis Trailhead parking lot: " If you enjoyed using this parking lot during the federal shutdown, please consider becoming a member of Sandia Nordic or making a donation. sandianordic.org." And respond, people have. Dietrich said the club has raised about \$1,200 since the storms hit right after Christmas. Because of the shutdown, the Forest Service was not able to pay its contractor to remove the large amount of snow, Dietrich said, so the club stepped up." It was really a safety hazard," he said, " people were parking anywhere they could." As additional snow falls, Forest Service workers who are not getting paid are clearing some of the lots themselves." They are the new forest volunteers," Dietrich said. Capulin Snowplay Area is one of the areas that have gotten attention. After being closed for several years because of lack of snow and volunteers to staff the area, it is open, and parking areas have been cleared. A popular activity in the Sandias, the Sandia Mountain Snowshoe Race, is on for Jan. 26. The race proceeds go to the Friends of the Sandia Mountains for the preservation and maintenance of trails. The race is sold-out, with more than 100 racers. According to George Brooks, director of Ski New Mexico, almost all the other popular areas to cross-country ski in the state are open." Really, the only area affected is Valles Caldera," he said. As a national preserve, the entire area is closed, and it has been reported that someone was stationed at the closed gate to keep people out of the area. Forest Service trails around Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Chama are all taken care of by volunteers or, as in the case of Chama, by city government, Brooks said. The commercial areas at Angel Fire and the Enchanted Forest are open," and the snow is great," he said. As for other recreation areas managed by the National Park Service in New Mexico, most are closed. At Petroglyph National Monument, there are no visitor services available however trails are open from sunrise to sunset. Restrooms at Rinconada Canyon and the Volcanoes Day Use Area are open. Bandelier National Monument is closed to all visitors. White Sands National Monument is closed to all visitors. Carlsbad Caverns National Park the visitor center and cavern are closed, but park roads and trails are open. Chaco Culture National Historical Park is closed. Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is closed, but restrooms and potable water are available at the Gila Visitor Center. More information on the federal government shutdown: [nps.gov / state / nm / index. htm](http://nps.gov/state/nm/index.htm)