

# PHILMONT AMBASSADOR UPDATE

PAGE 1

SERVING BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

September 2024

## Julia and John Lesko Named New National Ambassador Coordinators

Danny Tucker was pleased to announce that Julia and John Lesko will be the new Philmont Ambassador National Coordinators. Not only do they have a tremendous wealth of Scouting experience, but they are also both enthusiastic supporters of “both sides of the road”.

The Leskos intend to build on the success of the Ambassador program by providing current Ambassadors with tools and ideas to help promote the Ranch. “We want to work with the four Regional coordinators to identify, orient, and train all new Ambassadors,” says Julia. “We hope to make a special effort to get folks to an Ambassador conference in 2025 to help fill in the knowledge gaps that will help them be successful.”

“We want to make sure the Ambassador seminars enhance not just the knowledge of our Philmont Ambassadors, but also enhance their skills and techniques to connect with today’s generation of leaders and parents. We need to excite Scouts, Scouters, and non-Scouters to come and bring others to have an unforgettable experience at Philmont,” they explained.

John looks to his own experiences to enhance the Philmont Ambassador seminars. “On the national level, I’ve had a very special opportunity to work with a team sponsored by Scouting University to enhance training for several course curricula. Specifically, we’ve looked at instructional design and how to make training more hands-on rather than lecture-based. This effort had its genesis with the BEST Study



Julia and John Lesko atop the Tooth of Time. (John Lesko photo)

### Camping Wrap-up

## Successful Season on the Trails

The 2024 Philmont camping season successfully wrapped up with a total of 14,163 trek participants who went on over 1300 treks according to Matt Hart, Camping Director. Philmont’s Individual Opportunity programs attracted 292 scouts, and \$418,899 in scholarships were awarded to deserving individuals. The Camping HQ Dining Hall served 184,000 meals to feed the hungry hikers before and after their Treks. New options for gluten free and vegetarian

meals were well received.

Highlights in the backcountry included the reopening of Harlan camp and using Ring Place as a staffed camp. Fulfilling its goal of sustainable camping, Philmont rested the Carson Meadows and Santa Claus camps for the summer.

Another part of Philmont’s sustainability initiative is the recycling program. All those empty plastic food packages for trail meals are now being recycled. See the article on page 3 for more on this effort.

While most participants took the training and preparedness recommendations to heart, over 50 individuals arriving at Philmont did not meet either weight re-

**2026 Trek Enrollment  
Dates:  
October 1 to 16**

*Leskos* (Continued on page 7)

*Treks* (Continued on page 8)



# PTC Celebrates 75 in '25



Make your plans now to attend a conference at PTC in 2025 to join in its 75th Birthday Celebration with Scouters from all over the country. (Philmont photo)

PTC will be bubbling with activity all during the summer of 2025 in celebration of its 75th anniversary. Danny Tucker and PTC staff have been working hard on scheduling a summer full of conferences and family fun. Their work is ongoing, and more conferences will be added as details are finalized. Notably for Ambassadors, their seminars will take place during the latter half of June, but the exact dates have not been finalized yet. The current schedule is posted [here](#), but check back frequently as it will be updated as new offerings are added. Course registration is slated to open October 1.

Remember that conference registration is a two-part process. Attendees first select the conference or adventure camp week that they wish to attend. They will then be directed to CampSpot to reserve a Terrace Tent, Family Tent or roofed housing option of their choice.

Some of the highlights for the coming summer include the kick-off Commissioner's week during June 8 to 14. Conferences that will help Commissioners strengthen units at unit, district and council levels are featured. Because Scouting is all about working together, a full week of sessions devoted to relationships takes place from

June 22 to 28.

A truly special week occurs during June 29 to July 5 to celebrate PTC's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Highlights of the week include a Alumni Reunion and Home on the Range Family Adventure Camp. This is the week of the Fourth of July Maverick Club Rodeo in Cimarron which is the longest running open rodeo in the West. The Maverick Club was organized in 1922 and takes its name from the term for a stray calf because they did not fit the mold of a typical service group. They held the first rodeo in 1923 and it's been continuing annually ever since. Many of Philmont's wranglers and ranch hands will be participating in the rodeo events.

If you attend the anniversary celebrations, plan to stick around for the ever-popular Philmont History conference the following week. You'll spend the week travelling all over the Ranch led by long-time PTC director Mark Anderson who has encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the area and Philmont operations.

Scouting U takes over PTC during July 13 to 19 with courses on district administration and operations as well as Council Key 3 activities. During July 20 to 26, the National Council of OA Chiefs will be gathering at PTC for training, activities and

gatherings to further the fellowship of cheerful service among key lodge leaders.

Family Adventure Camp – both full and half-week sessions - will be going on throughout the summer.

Later in the summer, the National Executive Committee will be holding a workshop, and landowners in the New Mexico area will be holding a Land Management Symposium.

What better place to attend Wood Badge training than at Philmont? The Circle Ten Council will be holding the course during August 4 to 10, and the Longhorn Council will be doing the same from September 21 to 27. Wrapping up the season, the National Outdoor Conference will be at Philmont from September 14 to 21.

In order to ensure the success of PTC's summer, Ambassadors need to do more than just publicize this schedule. They need to recruit Scouters for specific conferences such as calling Commissioners about the Commissioner week, reaching out to Key 3 members about their conferences, and Advance Chairs about the "Issues and Solutions" conference.



# Philmont's Plastics Get A New Life

By Ginny Crossland, PhilNews writer

If you've ever wondered what happens to meal bags snakes after crews return from the backcountry, then the recycling coordinators at the commissary have an exciting answer for you!

As of the spring of 2024, Philmont has officially partnered with Trex Decking, which turns recycled plastics into decking materials and deck furniture.

Eliana Richards, one of the two recycling coordinators for the summer of 2024, takes all the recyclables that come in from the backcountry and base camp and compacts them into bales. One bale is made up of about six dumpsters of plastic. These bales are then collected by Trex Decking.

Philmont sends Trex Decking its No. 4 plastics, which includes items like bread bags, Saran wrap, and most importantly, trail meal bags. No. 4 plastics are difficult to recycle, and not a lot of recycling facilities

accept them, so having somewhere to send them is important.

"It's great because that means that all that plastic is not going into the landfill anymore," said Richards.

In the future, Philmont might also start sending Trex Decking its No. 2 plastics, which include milk and water jugs, juice bottles, and cleaning supply bottles.

Recycling with Trex Decking doesn't have to end when you leave Philmont, and you don't have to be a commercial business with an official partnership. Trex Decking has drop-off locations all over the United States, where individuals can bring in their own plastics from home.

**P2**



Top left: One of the thousands of trail meals in its plastic bag that now gets recycled. Bottom left: Commissary staff stands in a dumpster atop a flatbed truck. A snake of used trail meal bags hangs down the side. Top right : Commissary staff hoists a recycling dumpster into the air with a forklift. Bottom: Recycling coordinators Eliana Richards and Collin Stees pose with a large pile of used trail meal bags. *Photos by Derek Shiney and Tom Baltutis.*



## Philmont History

# Land Disputes Sparked Colfax County War

Nearly a century and a half ago, the parcels that became Philmont were center stage in a bloody conflict over control of that land.

In May 1887, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to confirm the validity of the Maxwell Land Grant. The decision effectively ended the infamous Colfax County War, fifteen years of conflict, violence and killings in and around Cimarron, the center of the Rhode Island- sized land holdings.

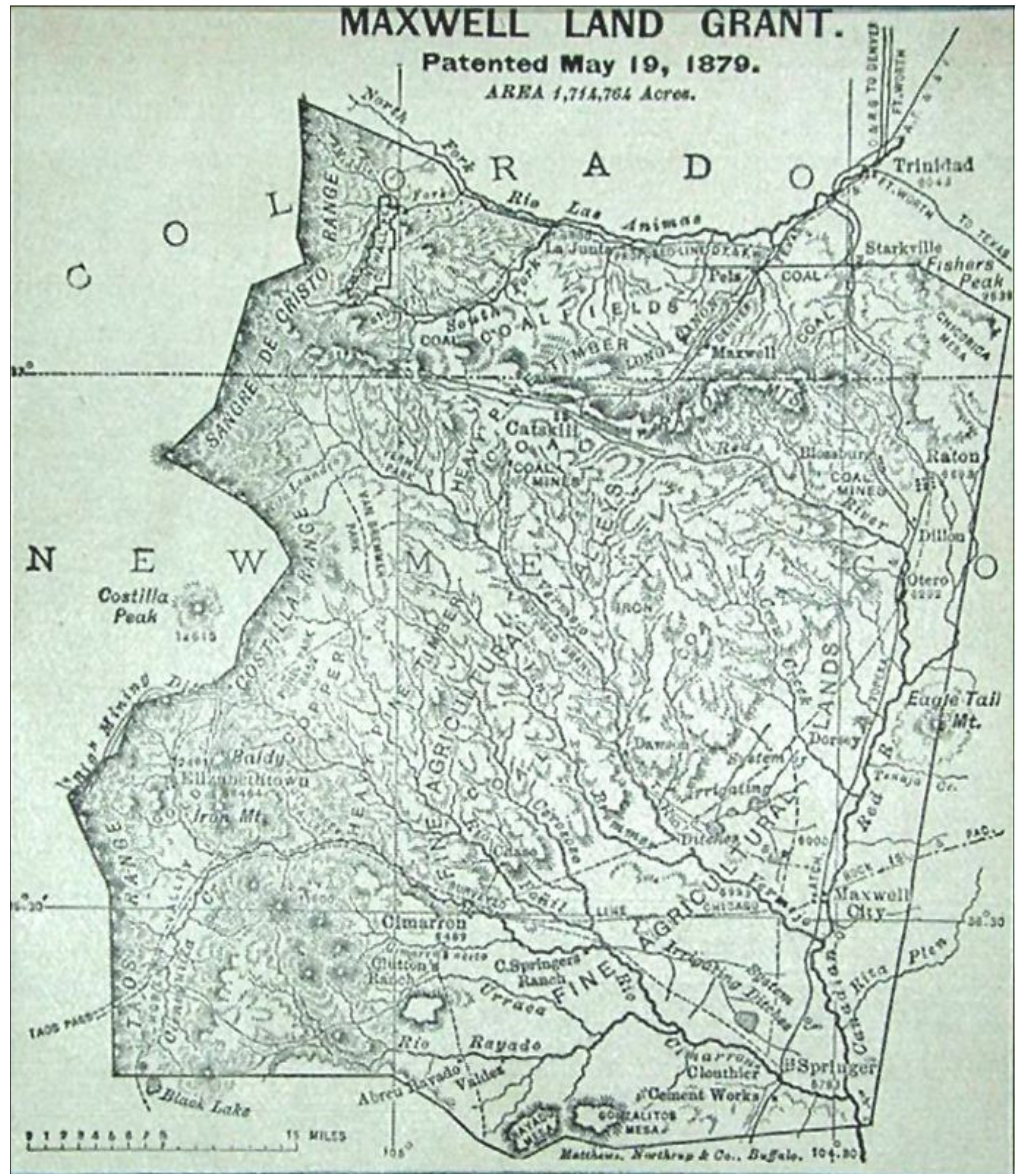
Tensions first arose after Lucien Maxwell sold his massive land holdings in 1870. The British investors who purchased the 1.7 million acres expected, of course, to profit from their land. When Maxwell, somewhat of a benevolent dictator, left town, so did his practice of "getting along" with the itinerant ranchers, farmers, miners, and squatters who worked the vast land grant acreage. Now, the British-held Maxwell Land Grant Company treated these people as unwelcome squatters and demanded compensation.

Issues of money or religion commonly exist at the start of armed conflicts. The Colfax County War involved elements of both.

As friction grew from heavy-handed policies of the new Land Grant owners, a Methodist minister, the Rev. Franklin Tolby, sided with the settlers and became a vocal critic. On September 14, 1875, he was found shot to death in Cimarron Canyon. His untouched belongings indicated that robbery was not a motive. If the killing was meant to intimidate the people working the land into silence, it did exactly the opposite. The war had begun.

A second minister and friend of Rev. Tolby, the Rev. O.P. McMains, took up the crusade against the British company and its allies of powerful New Mexico politicians, known as the Santa Fe Ring. Rev. McMains declared: "The war is on; the precious blood of settlers has been shed, and we must fight it out on this line. No quarter now for the foreign land thieves and their hired assassins."

A central issue in the conflict was the permissible size of a land grant, and even Maxwell, before his sale, had ignored a territorial ruling that a single grant could not exceed an area of twenty-two league



This early map of the Maxwell Land Grant showed the abundant resources like coal, timber and agricultural lands which made the area so desirable to settlers and squatters alike.

(about 168,000 acres), a bit larger than present-day Philmont. The Beaubien-Miranda and Maxwell land size had grown to more than ten times greater, 1,714,764 acres.

This bad blood resulted in a decade-plus of spilled blood. As many as 200 people were killed in the conflict as raids, arson, violence, cattle rustling, lawlessness, and vigilante justice prevailed in the Cimarron area. The resisting settlers came to call themselves the Colfax County Ring, and gunslinger Clay Allison became the most notorious of the those fighting the estab-

lishment forces. Allison led the lynching of a Santa Fe-supported constable, Cruz Vega, who was suspected by the mob of involvement in Rev. Tolby's death. Allison and his brother chased a Santa Fe Ring-appointed probate judge, Dr. Robert Longwell, to Fort Union, but failed to catch him before he reached the safety of the fort's walls.

At one point, the influential grant owners persuaded the New Mexico territorial governor, Lionel Sheldon, to assemble a military force, and thirty-five troops were



# Silverado Program Inspires Poetic Praise

By Don Winn, Philmont Ambassador

We have so many great conferences at the Philmont Training Center. You can learn new skills relative to your scouting jobs at the Key 3 conferences or the Cub Scouting conferences. But you can also participate in conferences that are just fun for you, like Fly Fishing or Woodcarving. It is truly the national training center for Scouters.

Many participants bring their families along, but let's not think of those individuals as merely tagging along with their dedicated Scouter. They participate in their own programs which can be no less transformative.

I have been inviting my daughter's family to Philmont for a number of years, but my son-in-law didn't feel that he could break away from the pressures of his work. But this year he finally decided to take the time to stop and smell the pine trees.

Francis said that he hasn't been of the mind to write poetry in years. In Waite's 1941 dedication address, Waite talked what can be accomplished through "the inspiration of nature." So the magic that we all know exists at Philmont inspired Francis to write this poem about what an impact the week had on him and his family.

*It was a brief drive to get away from my busy life*

*A one-week pause in nature to mostly be with my wife*

*A first vacation in as long as I can recall*

*I hadn't been on a Scouting trip since I was small*

*It feels like a honeymoon in the Silverado group*

*I wish to play this happy memory in an endless loop*

*With my wife I learn how to make pottery*

*Only a few days in and it feels like I won the lottery*

*We laugh and enjoy nature together*

*For the first time we relish the beauty of a swallow's feather*

*In the moments of time with my daughter I spend*



Don Winn's daughter Jen (left) with her daughter Ava husband Francis Yoshimoto enjoy the backcountry scenery on one of their hikes. (Don Winn photo)

*I am overjoyed to see her play with her new friends*

*I enjoy eating at the dining hall with a variety of choices*

*I enjoy being around friendly faces and hearing laughter and many different voices*

*Each person here has a different story*

*But we all spend time at this place and enjoy God's magnificent glory*

Wow! The PTC mission statement proclaims that it is the premier environment for Learning, Playing, Relaxing and Creating Lifetime Friendships and Unforgettable Memories. Mission Accomplished!

I challenge you to bring someone close to you to God's country next year and let them discover their inner HOMe. And in your role as a Philmont Ambassador, let your audience know what a life changing effect their whole family can experience.

**P2**

**Do you have a Philmont story to share?**

**Send it to newsletter editor Tom Baltutis at [tfbaltutis@gmail.com](mailto:tfbaltutis@gmail.com).**

## Preparedness Seminars Begin October 16

The main difference between a successful crew that thoroughly enjoys its time on a Philmont trek and one that sees it as a tortuous slog is preparation. Philmont's camping staff will be starting its new round of preparedness seminars beginning October 16. The first session will be a season overview and introduction to the Preparedness Seminar series.

Most questions that crews have about

gear and preparation are covered by knowledgeable staff.

Ambassadors cannot emphasize enough the importance of watching these information programs to adult advisors and crew leaders. The link has been sent to the advisors and the recorded programs should be available [here](#) as they are posted.

**P2**

# Preparation for 2025 Treks Starts Now

cc= Council Contingent u=unit crew

A= Ambassador

## Winter/Spring Before Your Trek

- Conduct critique with a previous year's expedition advisers. (cc, u)
- Council Philmont kickoff. (cc, A)
- Determine attendance objective for council and districts. (cc, A)
- Establish schedules for mailings, meeting, promotion. (cc, u)
- Confirm two-deep leadership per crew with at least one alternate. (cc, u)
- Announce details in council bulletin. (cc, A)
- Share Philmont plans with promotion camping committee. (cc, A)
- Share Philmont plans with promotion unit committee. (u)
- Promote Philmont at roundtables. (cc, A)

- Collect first payment from each participant. (cc)
- Collect reservation fee payment from each participant. (cc, u)
- Transmit reservation fee payment to Philmont. (cc - May 1); (u - January 31)
- Collect advance fee payment from each participant. (u)
- Philmont committee meets with all selected expedition leaders and reviews plans. (cc)
- Conduct Philmont parents rally. (cc, u, A)
- Sign up 100 percent of quota by end of month. (cc)
- Share risk advisory statement with parents. (cc, u)
- Arrange transportation and overnight accommodations to and from Philmont. (cc, u)
- Make plans for training and the second

parents meeting. (cc)

- Receive and distribute health and medical records from Philmont. (cc, u)

## December/January The Year of Your Trek

- Complete online itinerary selection in late January.
- Each participant schedule medical exam; review completed medical forms prior to shakedown activities. (cc, u)
- Continue updating Philmont news in council bulletin. (cc, A)
- Begin physical fitness training plan. (cc, u)
- Each crew conducts a series of training experiences prior to arrival at Philmont (two or three are recommended); start easy and increase the difficulty, with several days of camping and hiking with full packs. (cc, u)
- Send a reminder for the final fee payment due to Philmont by March 1. (cc, u)

## March

- Transmit the final fee payment to Philmont by March 1. (cc, u)
  - Receive Advisor's Kit (mid-March), including Treks – Itinerary Guide, Guidebook to Adventure, and map from Philmont. (cc, u)
- Continue physical fitness training. (cc, u)

## April

- Share accident and sickness insurance information, risk advisory statement, expedition number, Philmont address, and emergency telephone number with parents. (cc, u)
- Continue physical fitness training. (cc, u)

## May

- Complete details; confirm travel plans in writing. (cc, u)
- Return Arrival Plans card. (cc, u)
- Prepare and release story about your trek to local news media. (cc, u, A)
- Continue physical fitness training. (cc, u)
- Receive access link from [rosters@registerphilmont.org](mailto:rosters@registerphilmont.org) to Philmont Roster & Arrival Gateway. (cc, u)
- Submit crew roster and travel plans information via the online gateway. (cc, u)

## June, July, August

- This year's expedition is all set to go! (cc, u)
- Bring to Philmont your Wilderness First Aid/CPR verification. (cc, u)



## CIMARRON SILVER COLLECTION

TOOTH OF TIME TRADERS



**INTRODUCING THE CIMARRON SILVER BELT BUCKLE, A REFINED TWIST ON OUR CLASSIC PHILMONT SCOUT RANCH DESIGN.**

**THIS BEAUTIFUL BUCKLE FEATURES A CIMARRON SILVER FINISH THAT ADDS A SOPHISTICATED, POLISHED SHINE, REFLECTING THE BEAUTY OF OUR HISTORIC TOWN.**

**THE BUCKLE'S CRUSHED TURQUOISE INLAY OFFERS A STRIKING SOUTHWESTERN CONTRAST, AND YOU CAN CHOOSE BETWEEN OUR TRADITIONAL CATTLE OR HORSE BRAND.**

**COMBINING TIMELESS STYLE WITH THE RUGGED ALLURE OF THE FRONTIER, THIS BUCKLE IS A SOPHISTICATED NOD TO BOTH TRADITION AND ADVENTURE.**



# New National Coordinators Have Extensive Philmont Experience

**Leskos** (Continued from page 1)

and its assessment of Wood Badge. On this point, Julia and I as the co-chairs are hoping to bring interactive team-based learning to the Philmont Ambassador seminars. “

“We want to make sure we synchronize the efforts of each and every Philmont Ambassador to use a more targeted strategy that enables Ambassadors to meet the challenge of identifying and sending one or more members from their council to a PTC conferences every week during the 2025 season,” he added.

For those who cannot attend a seminar, they hope to have on-line mini sessions, micro-learning opportunities, and even regional rendezvous to assist in delivering the message about Philmont opportunities

One of their goals is to update the seminar curriculum to focus Ambassadors on coordinating with their council calendar to create their own 12-month Philmont Ambassador promotion calendar/check list like the one suggested by Danny Tucker [here](#). Another goal is to help Ambassadors develop multiple, personal elevator speeches which are short sales pitches specifically designed to resonate with their audience.

They hope to identify new ways to gather and share ideas and best practices within the Philmont Ambassador community, possibly improving the online Philmont Ambassador presentation reporting system by making it simpler to access via mobile devices.

Another focus will be in recruiting Ambassadors in the 55% of councils that do not currently have one. “Too many Scouts and Scouters are missing the many opportunities at Philmont because of these vacancies” according to the Leskos. Existing Ambassadors can help in this effort by encouraging acquaintances they meet at national or territory events such as NOAC or a regional rendezvous to apply to be a Philmont Ambassador.

John and Julia Lesko are both Ambassadors to the National Capital Area Council which delivers the promise of Scouting to youth in the Washington, D.C. area, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands and U.S. citizens abroad in the Americas. It has the largest

membership among councils, so it presents a challenge in promoting Philmont. Fortunately, they have help from other Ambassadors including new applicants in the pipeline.

Both the Leskos wear many hats. John is a District Committee member and serves on the Council’s C.O.P.E. & Climbing committee. Active in the Order of the Arrow, he has served on training staff at OA Fellowships, Conclaves, and as faculty at a National Order of the Arrow Conference. He has had a special opportunity to work with a team sponsored by Scouting U to create the ‘Facilitators Development Series Videos’ found at <https://www.scouting.org/training/learning-library/facilitators-development-series-videos/>.

Although he has not been on a Trek; early on John first experienced Philmont as a Silverado. Since then John has been very active at PTC as a conference participant, as a docent at the National Scouting Museum, and on PTC faculty. As a participant he has attended conferences on Fly Fishing, Training Fundamentals, as well as the Ambassador Seminar in 2023. As a member of the faculty both he and Julia co-designed and then co-facilitated the conference entitled: ‘Acquire the Facilitator’s Advantage.’ John is also a graduate of and happy to talk to anyone about the Philmont Leadership Challenge — a week-long, deep-dive into what it means to become a servant leader.

A passionate trainer, Julia has enjoyed many opportunities in Scouting to develop and deliver training to youth and adult leaders. She developed training on three BSA national task forces: as chair of the Commissioner College Curriculum Update Task Force, as a member of the Wood Badge Curriculum Update Task Force-Leadership Team and as a writer of original training materials for the Cub Scout Roundtable Planning Guide Task Force. Julia currently serves as a National Committee Member, Council Advisory Board Member, OA Section and Lodge Training Advisor, and on Scouting U’s Strategic Training Plan Update task force.

During her 24 years as a Scouter, she worked closely with the Wood Badge and NYLT programs, and has served as the Na-

tional Wood Badge Coordinator. Julia is a retired civil servant with vast experience as a managing attorney where she served as the Deputy Director for Case Management and Attorney Development at the U.S. Surface Transportation Board regulating our nation’s freight railroads. She is a certified instructional designer and master trainer

A Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow, Julia is the recipient of the Silver Buffalo Award, Silver Antelope Award, and Silver Beaver Award.

Julia has been an Ambassador since the program kicked off in 2012. She was honored to be asked to become an Ambassador in 2012 when the program started. “I wanted to share my excitement for Philmont and encourage all scout leaders, especially new leaders, to create awe-inspiring memories with their families at Philmont! I have had incredible experiences with the PTC family program from my youth and later as a Scouter mother, as a PTC conference attendee, as a PTC conference faculty member, as a PTC volunteer staff, and as a National Scouting Museum docent.”

The Leskos are quite active promoting Philmont. Says John, “Julia and I try to follow the suggested yearly schedule that Danny Tucker has provided to all the Ambassadors. This month-by-month check list offers topics and suggested venues for Ambassadors’ presentations. We try to chat up Philmont whenever and wherever we can. Ambassadors can promote Philmont beyond a district or council event. During our travels across the country, I’ve found that wearing a Philmont Staff Cap or a leather belt hammered out at the PTC Craft Center with a Philmont belt buckle may trigger an informal conversation with someone who’s curious about Philmont. This is a great opening to promoting our Scouting Paradise.”

**P2**



# Another Successful Trekking Season



A well-prepared crew hikes into French Henry to participate in the gold mining program activities there. (Tom Baltutis photo)

## Treks (Continued from page 1)

quirements or blood pressure limits. It is important that Scouters understand that Philmont's requirements are strictly enforced, and Ambassadors need to emphasize this to potential participants. Matt says that it bears repeating: "Philmont is not a traditional summer camp. Preparation is critical."

Looking ahead to 2025, Whiteman Vega will reopen and Dean Cow will once again be offering climbing. The Ute Gulch commissary will be reopening as well. The reconstruction of cabins at Fishing Camp will continue so it will be rested. Other camps being rested are Chase Cow and Carson Meadows. Several camps which are not on Philmont property on the CS and Chase Ranches will be rested so that

Philmont maintains good relations with its neighbors.

The actual number of itineraries for 2025 is being adjusted based on 2024 participant feedback and actual usage so the total number will be reduced without greatly affecting backcountry opportunities.

For those crews looking to book a 2026 Trek, they need to know that while there is not a lottery, they still need to get their application in during the enrollment period of October 1 through October 16, 2024. Units that apply after that date may be put on a waiting list if the number of applications exceed the available slots. Philmont will be adjusting slots so that 7 and 9 day treks will be arriving each day of the summer instead of being restricted to certain days as they are now. Twelve-day Treks will continue to be offered all summer.

## P2

### Philmont Ambassador Newsletter

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# Land Disputes Sparked Conflict

## Colfax County (Continued from page 4)

gathered in Trinidad, Colorado, just north of the Land Grant boundary. But across Raton Pass, a posse of ranchers organized and bought up all available guns and ammunition. The outgunned militia was marched back to Colorado.

The legal issues chugged through the court systems, and finally, the U.S. Supreme Court's 1887 decision brought certainty to the situation. The Maxwell Land Grand Company – at that time owned by a group from the Netherlands after the English firm went into foreclosure in 1879 – could definitively sell and lease its lands or drive out the settlers. The company's control was complete.

A few last gasps at establishing homesteaders' claims likewise failed. In 1888,

several people were killed as violence erupted at the far northwest reaches of the grant, in Stonewall, Colorado. A final legal challenge ended in 1894 with another Supreme Court ruling wholly rejecting homesteader assertions.

The final nail in the coffin of the Maxwell-era quasi-public use of the land came in 1902, when wealthy Chicago grain baron William Bartlett bought 205,000 acres along the Vermejo River. Bartlett conditioned his purchase of what is now Vermejo Park that the sellers "are given two years to get the [squatters] off." [Editor's Note: For more on Vermejo Park, see the November, 2021 Ambassador Newsletter.]

*Taken from A Million Miles; 75 Years at Philmont Scout Ranch by David Mullins.*

## P2