

## **2016 March 9**

Dear Supporters of Ocate Cliffs,

First the good news: We received a grant from the McCune Foundation, a big New Mexico funder of non-profits. I'm engaged in pondering our immediate priorities before making any final decisions about money, and welcome your input. Some of the options are: need-based travel awards, retreat project expenses, and hiring an Americorps intern. The intern would help us make local connections in the autism world, and perhaps national connections as well. Some open questions about that are: What else would they do? And, should it be an autistic person (because it helps grow an autistic economy and fulfills one of our basic missions of employment for autistic people), or on the other hand should it be a more neurotypical person (so that they can make the kind of connections that I haven't been able to make on my own)?

Now the even better news: The snow will soon be gone, building will be under way, and you can be part of it! You can come for a few days, a week, or longer, and we'll schedule it so you can be with and work with other autistic people. It's not just about getting the work done or learning skills; it's much bigger than that. I want to work with you to create an environment where we can have deeply authentic and nurturing experiences that grow long term connections to like-minded people and give us power. If you want that too, write back and let me know. We'll find a way for you to get here.

There was no bad news this time :)

- Star Ford, Ocate Cliffs Program Manager

Here's a picture of the pond that the road passes on the way up the mountain. The last snow is melting but there could be another snowfall.



And here's a picture of some forest thinning work going on up there. Because of past mismanagement in the area, too many small trees are over-competing for light, and this project will improve the health of the system. Dark half-dead areas of the woods will become light and grassy next year, and the trees will be able to grow larger, while fire danger is also significantly reduced.

