



We envision southwestern Colorado being renowned for an orchard culture and economy based on the legendary quality & diversity of Montezuma Valley fruits.

OVERVIEW and STRATEGIC PLAN

Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project (MORP) works to preserve Colorado's fruit-growing heritage and to restore an orchard culture and economy to the southwestern region.

MORP formed in 2008 as an informal partnership with the Montezuma County Historical Society. Through conversations with descendants of pioneer settlers, co-founders Addie and Jude Schuenemeyer were excited to learn that fruit orchards once featured prominently in the agricultural landscape of southwestern Colorado. Montezuma County was renowned for its quality fruit – winning three gold medals at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. Many of these orchards still exist – primarily apples – as remnants of their prior grandeur and sometimes with only a few 100+ year-old trees remaining along a fence line. Fortunately, people who grew up with these old trees still live here to share their stories and knowledge. Together, they and their trees create a living history that few places have retained.

In 2014, MORP was formally organized with a Board of Directors. By then, MORP had informally made progress towards its mission since 2008 so was able to hit the ground running to systematically collect, document, and share the work done up until then; and to secure funding to make further progress towards our goals. MORP is organized under the fiscal sponsorship of 501c3 San Juan Resources Conservation and Developmental Council (SJRCDC) who provides bookkeeping, accounting, grant administration services, and fiscal accountability. Preservation, Cultural and Economic Revitalization, and Education & Outreach are specific Program Areas through which the CoDirectors move MORP towards its *vision of southwestern Colorado being renowned for an orchard culture and economy based on the legendary quality and diversity of Montezuma Valley Fruits*. MORP's CoDirectors are the full staff with the Board of Directors volunteering time in activities ranging from organizational and fiscal oversight to picking and pressing apples, logging in hundreds of volunteer hours annually.

MORP believes that the remarkable orchard culture and economy that once thrived here can again be possible through our diverse program work of preservation, education, and outreach. Through orchard and grafting workshops, school and community orchard establishment, genetic preservation, orchard restoration and fruit harvest, apple tree sales and donations, preservation through documentation and education, and direct engagement with knowledgeable people, an active interest in heritage orchards is again taking hold.

Our students and beneficiaries come from a diversity of backgrounds and range in age from

preschoolers to retirees. We directly teach over 500 students annually, engage with hundreds of orchard owners, and connect with thousands of others with our education and outreach. Our work targets our local community in Southwest Colorado, however, its benefits are far reaching as the importance of preserving diverse orchard heritage to grow local economy transcends borders. We are grateful to have members from every historic orchard district in Colorado as well as two dozen other states, attracting orchard owners, fruit enthusiasts, historians, cider makers, teachers, students of all ages, fellow non-profits and community organizations, research institutions, members of the media, and others to engage in our mission.

Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project's annual budget is \$130,000 with 76% going towards program work. In 2017, heritage tree sales brought in \$21,000 which offset the cost of discovering, propagating, and donating these rare genetics. Cash reserves are low averaging about \$5,000 for the year. Fiscal sponsor SJRCD receives a flat 7% fee for all financial services. Current funding sources include a \$42,400 USDA Local Food Promotion Program grant to pilot and study the use of a mobile juice processor as a tool to spur the local fruit economy; a \$35,000 History of Colorado grant to research and conduct classes on Colorado orchard history and Colorado historic apple varieties; and \$86,587 in an continuation of a Colorado Department of Agricultural USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant that allows MORP to continue to find, propagate, and reestablish rare genetics across Colorado, in collaboration with school, community, and research orchards.

MORP currently has 300 dues-paying members. We have developing a Sustain-a-Tree program to seek additional funding from business and major donor sponsorships of trees planted in MORP conservation and community orchards with a goal to generate up to \$40,000 annually. Gates Family Foundation, Ballantine Family Foundation, and Kenny Brothers Foundation have been early contributors to MORP to help make our work possible by bridging the gap between grants and member contributions. The majority of our funding currently comes from reimbursable grants which makes cash flow a challenge. Bridging this gap continues to be a primary financial need for which we continue to appeal to foundations and donors for assistance.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its formation in 2008, MORP has accomplished many things. We have:

- ◆ To date, compiled a list of 250 historic orchard sites to visit. Of these, mapped and documented 120 sites containing over 4,000 apple trees 80 to 135 years old, 800 other fruit trees, and over 100 historic features. Documented memories and researched histories of orchard owners which are just as important to us as the rare genetics the orchards contain.
- ◆ Established 8 heritage school orchards in collaboration with Montezuma School to Farm Project accompanied with heritage orchard curricula.
- ◆ Grafted 3,257 heritage apple trees to sell to fruit growers and donate to non-profits, schools, and institutions planting conservation orchards.
- ◆ Established a tree nursery to grow and preserve Colorado's rare fruit genetics. Submitted 489 apple leaf samples to USA-ARS for DNA identification. Results confirmed the diversity of endangered apples still growing in our landscape with 195 cultivars present in the samples.
- ◆ Received a Colorado's Most Endangered Place listing for the local historic Gold Medal Or-

- chard which also serves as a genetic bank and demonstration orchard for MORP.
- ◆ Completed a successful Mobile Cider Press Pilot in which MORP picked and paid orchard owners for 800 bushels of local apples which were pressed into 2,200 gallons of Montezuma Valley Heritage Blend juice and sold to cider makers throughout Colorado. This represented the first time that the Montezuma Valley found a market for its fruits in nearly two decades.

PROGRAM AREAS, GOALS, and OBJECTIVES

PRESERVATION: HISTORY, GENETICS AND ORCHARDS

MORP values our fruit-growing heritage and the horticultural expertise of our pioneers that are embodied in the historic fruit trees still growing today. MORP works to preserve these old varieties that we believe are more resilient, better adapted, and tastier than many of the commodity varieties commercially grown today. As a member of the “fruit exploring” community MORP works to obtain rare, endangered, lost, and new (non-patented) fruit genetics to conserve and make available to others without restriction to their continued propagation.

GOAL #1: Identify and conserve the rare fruit genetics and fruit-growing history of Montezuma County and the surrounding region.

Objectives

1. Locate, survey, inventory, and identify our historic orchards and their associated histories using tools such as GIS mapping, photography, genetic testing, oral histories, and historical documentation.
2. Operate the MORP Nursery to propagate and tend rare fruit genetics to sell and donate heritage trees to school, community, research, and conservation orchards.
3. Develop orchard and fruit databases to document & preserve our heritage that link to similar projects across the state and country.
4. Compile a comprehensive list of historic varieties once grown here to restore to our local orchards. Some of these varieties will be found still growing here; others can be sourced from collectors and repositories. We are actively seeking varieties that were grown here that are now considered extinct such as the Walbridge and Shackelford apples

GOAL #2: Revive our historic orchards and plant new ones.

Objectives

1. Develop Orchard Planting Plan based on completion of objectives 2-6 below.
2. Develop protocol for strategic investment of MORP resources, ensuring public benefit for charitable contributions and avoiding inurement on private lands.
 - a. Develop orchard selection criteria for BOD approval. Distinguish between MORP services that have public benefit or are provided on a fee for service basis etc.
3. Work with MSTFP on the installation of school orchards (See Goal #3 under Education/ Outreach).
4. Restore the historic "Gold Medal Orchard" and have it listed as a SAVED SITE with Colorado Preservation, Inc.

5. Establish Historic Preservation, Research, and Conservation Orchards that serve as a living history museums and repositories, and interact with the community to include education and agro-tourism
6. Explore feasibility of MORP acquiring its own orchard or collaborate on the purchase of a property as a genetic bank, historic orchard, and living history museum.
7. Work with the Montezuma Land Conservancy to establish a network of orchard conservation easements with a goal to preserve 1,000 acres of "Orchard Country".

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

MORP believes the widespread interest in local food and cider—combined with our orchard, soil and water resources—make the time ripe to re-build a local fruit economy.

Goal #1: Return an orchard culture and economy to the region based on the legendary quality of Montezuma Valley Fruits

Objectives

1. Conduct a market analysis and feasibility study for marketing local apples and juice, with specific analysis of the utility of a mobile cider press. We see the key issues to be marketing and transportation, pest control, and labor (pruning and picking).
2. Research and develop strategies and tactics to restore, plant, prune, and naturally manage pests and disease to sustain fruit production in the region.
 - a. Develop recommendations for orchard owners
 - c. Explore options to pay for services (i.e. barter, Fee-4-Service, etc.)
 - d. Use the results from the orchard survey and feasibility study to market our fruit and create structures to preserve our local heritage and fruit economy for perpetuity.
4. Define MORP role as a service organization to orchard owners. (i.e. possible formation of an association of orchard owners in which MORP serves as an organizing and support system for fruit growers, or perhaps a structured fee for service arrangement within the non-profit, or labor cooperative outside of the organization.)
5. Revive the Montezuma Valley Fruit label as a regional brand that signifies legendary fruit – much like the Palisade peach.

EDUCATION/OUTREACH

Education and outreach are critical to sharing the knowledge and resources that MORP uncovers and develops. Education has been and will continue to be at the forefront of MORP's work.

Goal #1: Be an educational resource for our community and beyond

Objectives

1. Develop models for orchard/fruit education in the county and elsewhere.
 - a. Create of Orchard Owners Handbook
 - b. Develop heritage orchard curriculum for K-12 in collaboration with MSTFP
2. Teach workshops on: fruit identification, pruning, grafting, orchard establishment and maintenance, and fruit grading.
3. Continue our work in local schools to teach students about their fruit-growing heritage and plant and tend orchards.
4. Communicate with members and other interested parties
 - a. Write and send e-newsletters quarterly
 - b. Maintain Facebook presence and updates

- c. Write and mail printed newsletter annually, spring and fall
- d. Respond to information requests via email, phone etc in a timely fashion
- f. Develop clear and consistent messaging about MORP's work
 - a. Develop and maintain up-to-date website
 - b. Update brochure as necessary
 - c. Work with Board and volunteers to develop their elevator speeches
- 5. Participate in telling the story of the fruit growing history of Colorado through outreach, research collaborations, etc.
 - a. Develop partnership with History Colorado (possible result in exhibit on Colorado Fruit Growing History)
- 6. Create systems to institutionalize and share resources, expertise and knowledge.
 - a. Develop and maintain a shareable database and back up for database

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY

Goal #1: MORP maintains the resources, expertise, capacity to carry out its mission in a viable, long-term manner.

Objectives:

- 1. Determine and implement appropriate organizational structure/entity
- 2. Board Development
 - a. Create Board Development Committee to oversee board member life cycle
 - b. Identify Board roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, and process to fill them.
 - c. Identify prospects, recruit, nominate, and elect qualified candidates
 - d. Create Board handbooks with organizational history
- 3. Develop and maintain fundraising plan that builds diverse and sustainable support for MORP and ensures annual operating needs are met
 - a. Create development committee to set fundraising goals, develop and implement strategies/activities to raise funds
- 4. Develop internal systems and organizational structures
 - a. Create bookkeeping system
 - b. Create membership database
 - c. Ensure all data and files are backed up routinely
 - d. Create policies and procedures
- 5. Develop Human Capital
 - a. Create job descriptions and necessary contracts
 - b. Develop Volunteer Program
 - c. Develop and maintain partnerships for collaboration and cooperation

Goal #2: MORP is a trusted and respected community resource

Objectives:

- 1. MORP maintains a reputation of having integrity
 - a. MORP communicates internally and externally with honesty and sincerity
 - b. MORP responds to requests for information in a timely manner
 - c. MORP follows through on commitments that are made taking into consideration human and financial capacity
 - d. MORP seeks grant funding and projects based on our strategic plan and Board identified goals and objectives; MORP completes final grant drafts in time for

- review and edit.
2. MORP is a leader in fruit exploring, the conservation of rare fruit genetics, and local fruit-economy development
 - a. MORP shares information, resources and expertise with other fruit-preservation efforts as capacity allows

WHY

MORP serves the community at large by preserving unique, diverse and resilient fruit varieties as the foundation of re-building the fruit sector of our local agricultural economy. As our fruit economy grows, consumers will benefit from increased availability of nutritious, regionally produced food. Pioneer families will delight in seeing their heritage trees grafted and replanted for future generations; researchers and genetic bankers will obtain new material for their collections; orchard owners can receive pruning and horticultural assistance, and community members of all ages will engage with their food system by planting and tending community orchards. From the preservation of open space and a healthy local food economy to remembering and re-establishing a historically significant way of life, we believe this project is community building in its essence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO CONTACT US:

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