**National Release**

**Please Note:** Photos (High Res.), a promo and a trailer are all availablein the pressroom of

New Mexico PBS at: <http://www.newmexicopbs.org/pressroom>

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (Date)

**A New Mexico ghost town --- 760,000 acres of bio-diverse designated wilderness**

**What better site for a classroom?**

Logo)

**Presents**

**LEARNING WILD**

(Airdate/Time, Channel)

**and streaming on the PBS App.**

**“The Wild Semester is not just a class, it’s your life.” -- Dr. Jenn Summers**

**“The students become seasoned veterans of the unexpected.” -- Tricia Rossettie**

**(City, State) --- (Station)** In the rugged backcountry of the Gila National Forest in southern New Mexico, Dr. Travis Perry of Furman University runs a unique field school for students of wildlife biology and ecology. For 16 weeks the students live and work in this remote and challenging environment, coming face to face with the wildlife they love in their pursuit to become effective conservation professionals. A one-hour documentary.

*Learning Wild* premieres **(Day/Date/Time) on (Station / Channel)** and is available streaming on the PBS App.  *Learning Wild* was created by Co-Producers Michael Abernathy and Matthew Murray, whose previous film *CloudStreet: Soaring the American West* received four Emmy nominations.

Every other fall semester since 2005, Dr. Perry has conducted the "Wild Semester" in Hermosa, a former 1880s mining town, as the base for experiential environmental learning.  In 2021 Travis and his wife started a conservation non-profit, Natural Curiosity, Inc. and purchased Hermosa to serve as a field station for conservation education, research, and wilderness stewardship.

*Learning Wild* documents the semester-long conservation education program which includes a 3-week wilderness field program. More than 110 students and teaching assistants have benefited from these experiential programs. Many of those students have gone on to career paths in conservation, including top level jobs in the U. S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, state game and fish agencies, conservation nonprofits, and outdoor schools. So far, these programs have only been offered every other year and only to college students of the hosting university.

*“Nothing has the same impact as experiential education. The classroom is not the place to create an appreciation for the awesome splendor of nature or the profound symmetry of a mountain lion.  To do this you must bring the student to the wild.”* -- Dr. Travis Perry

The historic mining town of Hermosa was founded in 1883. Even in remote Apache Indian country, gold and silver fever grew the town large enough to have its own literary society, hotel, saloon, blacksmith shop, meat market, livery stables and a twice weekly stage. A flash flood in June 1889 leveled much of the town, and by 1905 it numbered only 60 residents. The hotel still remains on the property.  Recent ownership includes media mogul and philanthropist Ted Turner, who with his conservation ethic, sought to further his family’s conservation goals by selling the Hermosa-Kelsey national forest and wilderness holdings to Natural Curiosity Inc. for research and environmental education of generations of environmental professionals.

*“For 16 years I've had the privilege of teaching generations of students the complexities of ecology, the practice of conservation, and the techniques necessary to conduct research in the field. I've taught them back country ethics and wilderness skills that turn fear of the wild into a love of the wild and turn timidity into self-confidence and self-reliance.”* -- Dr. Travis Perry

*Learning Wild* is made possible with the support of Allworth Financial, NMPBS, and viewers like you. Thank you.

**BIOS**

**Mike Abernathy, Co-Producer,** is an award-winning writer, producer, and cinematographer.  He spent the last four years developing *Learning Wild*, using cinema drones extensively to bring viewers in to the remote and rugged back country of New Mexico.  These techniques immerse the viewer in this extraordinary landscape.  Mike also operates cinema quality camera traps that allow viewers to experience wildlife intimately, yet non-intrusively.  This camera trapping is a continuous process in extremely remote places in New Mexico. *Learning Wild* marks his second PBS production. His first, *CloudStreet: Soaring the American West,* was nominated for four Emmy Awards, resulting in a win for Photography. Prior to this, Mike was a software entrepreneur developing mixed reality applications and technologies.  He was awarded several patents for his technical innovations.  He is an FAA certificated commercial drone pilot and glider pilot.  He and his production partner, Matthew Murray co-founded ShadowCat Conservation Films, LLC.

**Matthew Murray, Co-Producer,** is an award-winning independent filmmaker. *Learning Wild* marks his second PBS production. His first, *CloudStreet: Soaring the American West*, was nominated for four Emmy Awards, resulting in a win for Photography. His work in the corporate and non-profit world includes training films, documentaries and podcasts. He has earned five Telly Awards and been nominated for Best Documentary Short at the Long Beach Indie International Film Festival.  His script, *With Love*, was just purchased by Universal Studios and will star Academy Award Winner Ke Huy Quan with production expected to begin in March of 2024.

**Dr. Travis Perry,** **Professor of Biology, Furman University, Co-Founder "Natural Curiosity," & *Learning Wild*** **film participant.**

Travis thrives on engaged teaching, giving students first-hand experience in the subject matter. He believes that these are the academic experiences, more than any others, that change lives. He has Introduced students to the wilderness of New Mexico, the South African bush, the tropical forests of Costa Rica, and the natural environments of South Carolina. Dr. Perry feels his greatest professional achievement as an educator has been the design and implementation of Furman's Wild Semester. Dr. Perry received his PhD in ecology from the University of New Mexico. In addition to being Professor of Biology at Furman University, he is Adjunct Professor of Wildlife Biology, Clemson University. He was Former Adjunct Professor of Wildlife Biology, New Mexico State University, and Senior Research Associate, Rhodes University, Department of Entomology and Zoology. Grahamstown, South Africa.

**Megan Perry****, Biologist, CEO of "Natural Curiosity," & *Learning Wild*** **film participant.**

Megan Perry has developed her lifelong love of wild things and places into a career as a wildlife biologist and educator. She has been the co-director for the Wild Semester Study Away Program since 2011. She received her B.S. in Biology from Furman University where she was a student on the first Wild Semester program in 2005. She received her M.S. in Wildlife Biology from Clemson University studying mountain lion populations in southern New Mexico. Since then, she has worked as a contract wildlife biologist and continues to volunteer for the Furman Cougar Project managing data and supervising undergraduate students in the field. She is currently the CEO of Natural Curiosity, an outdoor education and conservation nonprofit she co-founded with Travis Perry in 2021.

**Student Information – From Around the U.S.**

*11 Students, representing different classes of the Wild Semester, not just the one covered in the film:*

Sophia - Pendleton, South Carolina

Anna - Gunnison, Colorado

William - Athens, Georgia

Phoebe - New Haven, Connecticut

Santana - Manchester, Massachusetts

Hagan - Ann Arbor, Michigan

Sammie - Milford, Ohio

Jocelyn - Chattanooga, Tennessee

Sydney - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bryce - Wilmington, North Carolina

Kaya - Princeton, New Jersey

Alexa - Muskego, Wisconsin

**THE SITE: HERMOSA SCHOOL – southern New Mexico / Gila National Forest**

**---Full History---**

The Hermosa property encompasses the site of a historic mining town, Hermosa, the Spanish word for beautiful. The town was founded in 1883 after the area’s first strike at the American Flag mine. Other later mines that formed the Palomas Mining District include the Palomas Chief, Ocean Wave, the Antelope and the Pelican. Even with the location in remote Apache Indian country, gold and silver fever grew the town large enough to have its own literary society, a hotel, a saloon, a blacksmith shop, a meat market, livery stables and a twice weekly stage. A flash flood in June of 1889 leveled much of the town, and with the eventual decline of viable mining the population by 1905 numbered only 60 residents. The hotel still remains on the property.

The west half of the Hermosa property was patented in 1911 to William H. Whitmer under the Homestead Act. Due to the transient nature of the boom-and-bust mining town and because the property was in large portion the townsite of Hermosa, it was subdivided to many owners with various lots including to the school district for a school. Julia Howe Bigelow Moffett deeded lots to Frederick W. Moffett, in the townsite of Hillsboro in 1912. No surviving plat of the town exists, and the property was later consolidated after flooding and emigration into ranch ownership.

Recent ownership includes media mogul and philanthropist Ted Turner, who owns several large ranches throughout New Mexico and the U.S. under many corporations. With his conservation ethic, he and his family and associates sought to further their conservation goals by selling the Hermosa-Kelsey national forest and wilderness inholdings to Natural Curiosity Inc. for research and environmental education of generations of environmental professionals, while also preserving the conservation values in perpetuity by requiring the placement of a conservation easement as part of the sale.  Every other fall semester since 2005, Dr. Travis Perry of Furman University has conducted the "Wild Semester" using Hermosa as the base for experiential environmental learning.  In 2021 Travis and his wife started a conservation non-profit, Natural Curiosity, Inc. and purchased Hermosa to serve as a field station for conservation education, research, and wilderness stewardship.

(Insert Station Boilerplate)

**New Mexico PBS (NMPBS)**

Celebrating over 65 years of service, NMPBS (KNME & KNMD-TV) serving New Mexico and the Navajo Nation, broadcasts and streams a wide array of nature, history, current affairs, health, performance, children's, educational and entertainment programs. NMPBS produces NEW MEXICO IN FOCUS, COLORES! and a variety of specials. NMPBS operates 5 digital KNME broadcast channels: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5, and streams most programs on the PBS App. The five KNMD Channels mirror KNME, and broadcast in ATSC 3.0, in the NextGen TV format. NMPBS is co-licensed to the University of New Mexico (UNM) and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). [www.nmpbs.org](http://www.nmpbs.org)

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