

After Dark

Updates from the Great Basin Observatory



Observatory Construction

Great Basin Observatory construction commenced in June and has progressed rapidly, even getting a bit ahead of schedule! The general contractor, Sea West Enterprises (San Dimas, CA) was selected for their experience building observatories similar to this one. Sea West hired several local subcontractors to help with the job: Baker Ranches (Baker, NV); Gust Electric (Ely, NV); Oasis AC & Heating (Fallon, NV); Stout Roofing (St. George, UT); and Schell Creek Construction (Elko, NV). Sea West brought in their own “swat team” to install the Astrohaven dome and the Planewave CDK700 telescope donated by the Niggli Family.

Project Manager Paul Gardner (Observatory Systems, Pasadena, CA) was on site for the installation of the telescope (photos below) and began running tests as soon as the bolts were tightened. His first night on site yielded good images, and he reported excellent “seeing” conditions of 1.5 arcseconds.



What's next?

Now that we have an observatory, the fun stuff begins! Paul will be testing equipment, and the first research projects will be initiated. We will also be working with Great Basin National Park to connect with visitors, develop tools for K-12 teachers, and raise the next generation of scientists and star-gazers. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please let us know!

Telescope Installation



The 28-inch Planewave CDK700 Telescope donated by the Niggli Family was hoisted into place on Friday, July 29.
Photos by Paul Gardner.

First Light and the NPS Centennial: August 25, 2016

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the *Organic Act*, creating the National Park Service and forever changing how we care for our most precious places. One hundred years later, the National Park Service is the steward of more than 400 parks, monuments, recreation areas, seashores, and battlefields, and continues to preserve and protect our heritage for future generations.

This August 25th, Great Basin National Park will celebrate the NPS Centennial with the dedication of the Great Basin Observatory. The GBO is the first research-grade observatory built in a national park. With its exceptional night skies, Great Basin National Park is an ideal location for star-gazing and astronomical research.

The *First Light* will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the GBO site. Please arrive at the park by noon. Shuttle buses will take visitors from the Great Basin Visitor Center in Baker, NV to the GBO site. Following the dedication, shuttles will return to the Great Basin Visitor Center, where the centennial celebration will continue with birthday cake, astronomy talks, and solar scopes trained on our favorite star, the sun. The park will also be hosting a “star party” at the Lehman Caves Visitor Center, beginning at 8:00 p.m.

A century ago, star-filled night skies were taken for granted. Today, our night skies are imperiled and our national parks are among the few places we can see the stars as our ancestors did. Indeed, preserving and interpreting dark night skies is an important goal for the NPS as it moves into its next century, and the Great Basin Observatory is proud to be part of this growing movement.

Who We Are

The Great Basin Observatory is a collaborative effort of Great Basin National Park; the Great Basin National Park Foundation; and four partner universities: University of Nevada, Reno; Western Nevada College in Carson City; Southern Utah University in Cedar City; and Concordia University in Irvine, CA. These partners have joined together in order to build and operate the first research-grade telescope in a National Park for the benefit of students, scholars, and Park visitors. The GBO will enable researchers to explore fundamental



If you are planning to attend the First Light, please send a note to GreatBasinFirstLight@gmail.com to help us in our preparations.

For directions, schedules, hotel information, and more, please visit GreatBasinObservatory.org/first-light.

For general information on Great Basin National Park, visit www.nps.gov/grba or call 775-234-7331.

questions about our universe, and its location in Great Basin National Park underscores the need to preserve night skies as a park resource.

Learn more at www.greatbasinobservatory.org.

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