

Beginning in January, Sul Ross State University (SRSU) will host a series of monthly guided hikes on Hancock Hill, offering the public a unique blend of education and outdoor adventure. Each hike, led by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) from SRSU, will explore various themes ranging from local wildlife and plant life to the geological and anthropological aspects of the area.

The hikes, scheduled to commence at 9 a.m. and last about two hours, will cover a 1.8-mile trail considered moderately strenuous. Participants will not only enjoy breathtaking views but also gain insights into the history of Alpine, SRSU, and Hancock Hill's natural history.

The spring schedule is diverse and engaging:

- **January 13:** A "General hike" led by Alex Hettena, Bill Adams, and Maureen Frank from the Borderlands Research Institute.
- **February 3:** Focusing on "Big game" with Justin French, a Big Game Specialist at the Borderlands Research Institute.
- **March 9:** Exploring "Tracks and scat" with GIS Specialist Alex Hettena.
- **April 20:** A "Birds" themed hike guided by David Tønnessen, a graduate student at the Borderlands Research Institute.

Future hikes for May through September will be announced, marking a collaborative effort between various SRSU institutes, including the Borderlands Research Institute, the Center for Big Bend Studies, Rio Grande Research Center, and the Department of Geology.

Dr. Kevin Urbanczyk, a professor of geology at SRSU, has been instrumental in enhancing the historic trail system on Hancock Hill since 2000, with the assistance of staff, faculty, students, and the Big Bend Trails Alliance. These trails, rich in history and used for decades, provide access to significant areas of the Sul Ross campus and adjacent public lands.

Dr. Urbanczyk describes the hikes as a "real backcountry experience" where participants can immerse themselves in the natural history, flora, fauna, and geology of the area, guided by experts.

The hikes are free and open to the public, but participation is limited to 12 hikers per event, necessitating prior reservations. Interested individuals can reserve their spot online at [www.sulross.edu/guided-hikes](http://www.sulross.edu/guided-hikes).

For updates and additional information, SRSU encourages the public to follow their social media channels on Facebook and Instagram. Announcements will also be made through local bulletin boards and visitor's centers.

Alex Hettena, co-organizer, expressed enthusiasm about the program: "We're looking forward to engaging with the public on these educational hikes that showcase the university's research areas. Our goal is to connect people with the rich human and natural history of Alpine and the Big Bend region."

For further inquiries, interested parties can contact via email at [guidedhikes@sulross.edu](mailto:guidedhikes@sulross.edu).