

Welcome to Earth Matters – field notes on the geology of New Mexico’s Enchanting Landscapes. Celebrating Earth Science Week, I’m Adam Read.

The wonder of the natural world has inspired both artistic creativity and intellectual curiosity since the dawn of humanity. It may be that our desire to create art, and to understand how the natural world works, is the root of what makes us human.

Fortunately for those of us that live in New Mexico, we have a lot to be inspired by, and we’ve had a tremendous amount of artistic expression here because of it.

The geologic landscape of New Mexico has also inspired generations of geologists for many of the same reasons. Much of the beauty of New Mexico is a consequence of the long and complex geologic history of the state. Our rugged mountains and mesas reveal our colorful rocks, and our arid climate keeps vegetation from entirely obscuring them. The rocks here are diverse, well exposed, and tell important parts of the long story that is the geologic history of the planet.

Every day, someone in the outdoors in New Mexico asks one of many questions like: “What is that?” *and* “How did it get to be that way?” *and* “Why?” These are some of the essential questions of geology, and science in general. Through curiosity and a lot of hard work, some of these questions get answered, but the amazing thing is that these answers lead to yet more mysteries to ponder. I’ve found that the more I know about the natural world, the more I appreciate it.

Try it yourself. Whether you are an artist, a scientist, or somewhere in between, learn something new about geology, or botany, or lizards, or really anything that strikes your fancy about the natural world. You’ll be surprised at how often you can use what you’ve learned when you’re in the outdoors again – and how odd it is that you never noticed it before. You’ll also notice how both what you do know, and the mysteries you don’t yet understand, make you appreciate the beauty of New Mexico even more.

Celebrating Earth Science Week, I’m Adam Read, geologist with the Bureau of Geology at New Mexico Tech.