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Trail Tales

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New Mexico 4-Wheelers



www.nm4w.org

Traction Control in 4-Low: Friend or Foe on the Trail?



By Frank Whiston



Most modern vehicles come equipped with traction control, and on the surface it sounds like a feature perfectly suited for four-wheeling. After all, *traction* and *control* are exactly what we're after when we head off pavement. But as many of us have learned on the trail, traction control isn't always your friend—especially in low range.

To understand why, it helps to look at what traction control systems generally do:

- Detect wheelspin
- Cut engine power
- Apply brakes to a spinning wheel

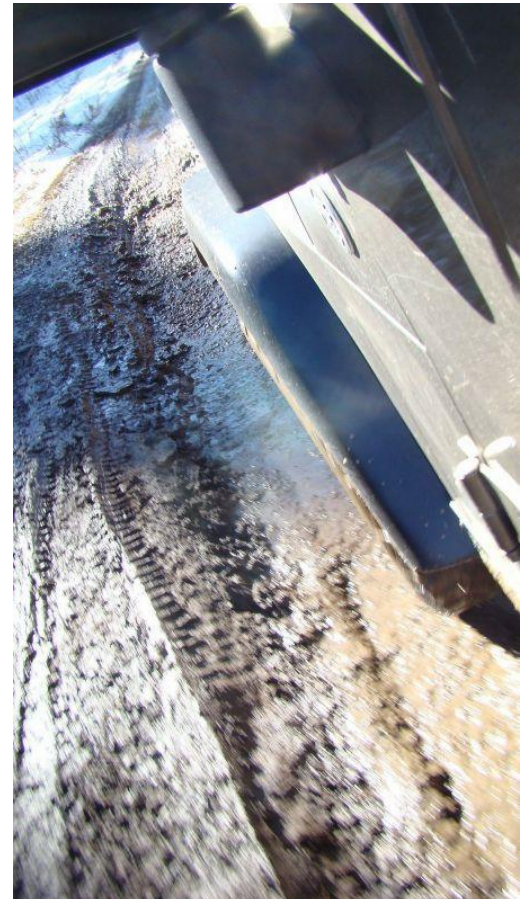
These actions work extremely well on pavement, snow, and ice. Off-highway, however, controlled wheelspin is often necessary to make forward progress.

When Traction Control Gets in the Way

My own Jeep is old enough that it doesn't have traction control, but I first saw this issue play out years ago on an NM4W Christmas Tree Run in the Jemez. My father had just bought a brand-new 2007 two-door JK Wrangler. While cruising down a two-track not far from pavement, we hit a shallow muddy section. His Jeep came to a complete stop—no matter how hard he pressed the gas.

The problem wasn't a lack of power or traction. What was needed was just a bit of wheelspin to clear the mud from the tires. The traction control system wouldn't allow it, cutting power every time the wheels slipped. Situations like this are common off-road. Climbing ledges, crawling over rocks, or maintaining momentum on steep or loose climbs all require some wheelspin. Fortunately, most manufacturers recognize this and either reduce or disable traction control when the vehicle is shifted into 4-Low.

How Different Manufacturers Handle Traction Control in 4-Low



While the goal is similar, each manufacturer approaches traction control in low range a little differently.

Jeep (Wrangler, Gladiator, etc.)

Jeep generally takes the simplest approach. When shifted into 4-Low, traction control and electronic stability control are reduced or disabled automatically. The dash usually confirms this change.

The intent is clear: low range is for slow, torque-rich crawling where driver input matters more than computer intervention. By backing off traction control, Jeep allows the driver to manage wheelspin without the system cutting power or constantly braking wheels.

Bottom line: Jeep prioritizes driver control and torque delivery in 4-Low.

Toyota (Tacoma, 4Runner, Land Cruiser, etc.)

Toyota uses a two-system approach:

- **TRAC** – standard traction control for normal driving
- **A-TRAC** – Active Traction Control, designed for off-road use

In 4-Low, traditional TRAC is reduced because it aggressively cuts power. Instead, Toyota offers A-TRAC, which brakes spinning wheels to transfer torque while allowing more engine power than standard traction control.

Depending on the model, A-TRAC may need to be manually engaged after shifting into low range. When used correctly, it provides off-road assistance without fighting necessary wheelspin.

Bottom line: Toyota replaces intrusive traction control with an off-road-tuned system in low range.

Ford (Bronco, F-150, Ranger, Expedition, etc.)

Ford's approach varies more by model and package. In general, traction control is reduced or disabled in 4-Low, but many vehicles retain configurable off-road modes.

Systems like G.O.A.T. Modes adjust throttle response, traction control, and stability systems based on terrain (rock, sand, mud). Some models keep limited traction assistance active using ABS-based braking while allowing more wheelspin than normal driving modes.

Bottom line: Ford offers flexibility and configurability, but behavior can vary depending on terrain mode and vehicle setup.

Why This Matters on Club Runs

All of these systems are designed with safety in mind, and on the road they do a great job. Off-highway, however, complexity doesn't always equal capability. Understanding what your vehicle is doing—or not doing—when you shift into 4-Low can mean the difference between smoothly clearing an obstacle and coming to a frustrating stop.

My personal take? These modern systems can help, but they're no substitute for driver skill. I've yet to see an electronic traction aid get someone over an obstacle that couldn't be handled with good line choice, throttle control, and experience—skills many of us learned long before computers entered the picture. My 1971 Bronco and 2004 LJ, neither of which have computer-controlled traction control, have never felt held back on the trail.

As always, know your vehicle, understand its systems, and practice using them in controlled conditions. That knowledge will serve you far better than any dashboard button when the trail gets technical.

Member Spotlight: Matt Ray

By Frank Whiston



This month we're featuring Matt Ray of Albuquerque, who joined the New Mexico 4-Wheelers in August 2024. Matt's love for the outdoors started early. Growing up, he spent a lot of time backpacking and exploring nature on foot. As the years went by, he realized there was an easier way to reach those remote places he loved—by vehicle. After buying a Jeep, his passion for four-wheeling quickly took off.

Matt currently drives a 2013 Jeep Wrangler Sport (2-door) that he admits has received more upgrades than its original value might justify. Like many Jeep builds, it started simply—with all-terrain tires—but soon evolved into a lift, upgraded suspension, larger tires, and more. As Matt puts it with a laugh, Jeep really does stand for “Just Empty Every Pocket.”

One of his favorite NM4W adventures so far has been running the Rimrocker Trail, though he says there are plenty of great trails closer to home as well. For New Mexico destinations, Chloride Canyon ranks high on his list, especially because he enjoys the history tied to many of the trails we travel.

Matt also shared one of his more memorable club moments from a trip to Moab. After a fellow member broke a leaf spring and ended up stranded, Matt stopped by their trailer to check in. The friendly gesture resulted in a slightly tense—but now hilarious—moment when the member answered the knock while packing heat. Lesson learned: always announce yourself first in the desert! Fortunately, it's a story that still gets laughs today.

When he's not behind the wheel on the trail, Matt enjoys camping, fishing, and hiking—especially when those activities can be combined with a four-wheel drive trip to a remote location. He's also active in his church, which often keeps him from attending Sunday club rides.



Another interesting fact about Matt: he's traveled to 15 countries and has met some notable people along the way, including three U.S. Presidents, the Dalai Lama, and Prince Harry, along with several other public officials.

For new or prospective members, Matt's advice is simple: jump right in and go on as many rides as you can. While he jokes that he's not always the best example when it comes to attending every run, he says the best part of NM4W is the people you meet along the way. We're glad to have Matt as part of the New Mexico 4-Wheelers community and look forward to seeing him—and his well-built Jeep—on more trails ahead.



Ride: Gordy's to Owl Cafe

By Jeff Boggs

On March 7, 2026 10 4x4's of various brands got together. Ford, Toyota, Jeep, Chevy, newer and older models.

We met at Road Runner Truck Stop in Lemitar on a cold Sat morning. Drove over to Arroyo Del Coyote trail (3 rated) and drove through that tight arroyo.

Came out on a road and then went down into Coyote Canyon (5 Rated) trail. This was a tight trail in an arroyo, and we needed to spot each other several times. Rock ledges, off cambers, tight fits between unmovable objects and invisible dangers! Bypasses were used by some. Some body damage on several rigs. But some very impressive driving by all. We had lunch at the end of Coyote canyon exit. By then it was warming up. Gabe and Catherine brought oranges for everyone!

After lunch, several folks turned back onto the main road and headed home. Gabe and Catherine went to a camp spot where they were meeting some other folks, to wheel on Sunday.

The rest of our group headed south on the main road. Beautiful canyons and mesas. Hardly any traffic all day. We turned off on one more low range road and the drove down to the highway and into San Antonio NM for our Green Chile Cheese Hamburger reward. Excellent food was had by all.

We had a great day, and it was time to head home. Lauri did a great job as tail gunner and she earned her PayDay!!

Thanks to everyone for getting out on the trail and experiencing another great NM4W trail ride!!

Several folks commented on the new trail signage. Thanks again to everyone and to the organizations who helped make this possible.

Until next time. Happy Trails to You!



Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2026

By Shirley Godfrey

President Jack Dickey called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

The meeting was held at North Domingo Baca Multi-Generational Center.

Jack thanked NaDeen Roland for hosting the meeting and bringing the wonderful, delicious, homemade snacks.

Jack asked for a volunteer to host the April meeting. Anthony Weaver and Allison Martinez volunteered.

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Amy Allen, Bruce Allen, Steve Allen, Cheryle Bakewell, Tracy Bakewell, Jeff Boggs, Glenn Boudreaux, JP Bowdoin, Guy Conway, Janet Crosby, Mike Crosby, Cathy Dickey, Jack Dickey, Patrick Dobson, Doug Elkins, , Shirley Godfrey, Ed Kausche, Lyn Kausche, Allison Martinez, Cliff Meier, Jack Nutter, Lauri Rector, Jonathan Rivera, NaDeen Roland, Don Roy, Richard Steele, Douglas Story II, Josh Tucker, Mary Turpin, Anthony Weaver, Frank Whiston, William Zobel

GUESTS ATTENDING: Michael Bossio, Doug Caddell, Pedro Estevan-Hernandez, Paul Ortega, Virginia Ortega, Laura Perlichek, Travis Rendell, Peter Vollers,

PRESIDENT – Jack Dickey

Cathy will do the 50/50 at the end of the meeting. In addition to the 50/50, NMOHVA offered a box full of goodies including a t-shirt.

On trail rides, it is up to the driver to make sure of his/her comfort level. Ask for help. Say something. The trail leader needs to know what is going on.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT – VP Jonathan Rivera

Jonathan has been busy sending out emails to the new applicants which has been in the double digits for several months. Applicants go to guests and them members.

There were 6 guests attending the meeting that were eligible to become members. A motion was made and approved by a majority of members present without discussion to vote in the following people as new members -

- Pedro Estevan-Hernandez, Albuquerque, voting (full) member (7 points)
- Lynn & Doug Caddell, Rio Rancho, voting(full) members (5 points)
- Travis Rindell, Albuquerque, voting(full) member (4 points)
- Michael Bossio, Moriarty, voting(full) member (4 points)
- Peter Vollers, Placitas, voting(full) member (4 points)
- Virginia & Paul Ortega, Corrales, voting(full) members (4 points)

Johanthan went over this past month's transgression fines.

Adding to the coffers this month –

Jack Dickey - the leader of the run, turned down the wrong arroyo.

Cliff Meier - had to borrow deflators having left his at home.

Mary Turpin – DID NOT DRIVE but walked onto Pueblo property to locate a tree for a 10/100.

Jeff Boggs – DID NOT LEAVE his coffee cup on the fender. He left his chair on the mesa after lunch.

SECRETARY'S REPORT - Shirley Godfrey

Meeting minutes can be read in the Newsletter. - A motion was made and approved by a majority of members present without discussion.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Rich Steele

Current balances for checking, saving accounts, and Pay Pal were provided.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the treasurer's report. Motion was approved by a majority of members present without discussion.

TRIP CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Mary Turpin

Thank you to all trail leaders for filling up runs. Trip leaders/ride attendees gave a brief rundown of the ride.

Past Events and Trips (9 since last meeting!)

- February 14, Rigs & Coffee, Frank Whiston – pictures can be found in the gallery
- February 15, Scenic Los Alamos, Leroy Lints – glorious day and the view were amazing
- February 21, Lucero Mesa Ride 2026, Jeff Boggs – great day, good group, Mt Taylor area
- February 22, Sunday Fun Day - more hard trails at Gordy's, Doug Elkins – good little rock crawling day
- February 28, Gordy's Hill to Owl Bar and Cafe Ride (overflow), Jack Dickey – took extra ride back to starting point.
- February 28, Caja del Rio Plateau redux, Matt Martel – no report
- March 7, Gordy's Hill to Owl Bar and Cafe Ride, Jeff Boggs – nine rigs, nice weather. Gate needs to be rewired and there was some damage to vehicles on the dride
- March 8, Lucero Mesa Ride 2026 (overflow), Jack Dickey – went to overlook, beautiful view
- March 9, Weekday Trail Ride-Chamisoso Trail to Lower Pine-Badge of Honor Ride, Jeff Grenier - no report

Upcoming Events and Trips

Seven trips are on the calendar before our next meeting, refer to website for details. Contact trip leader if there are questions.

DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPORT - Bill Zobel

FYI – NMOHVA newsletter state NM is up for a five-year review on the off-road play. There was a survey to fill out.

Program Chair Report – Cathy Dickey turned in money from sales and raffle. There is a second raffle tonight, a donation box from NMOHVA.

HISTORIAN'S REPORT - Frank Whiston – There are a lot of pictures to load once the system allows it.

WEBMASTER'S REPORT and NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT - Don Roy - Last four days can't upload pictures. Don was on the phone for 2 hours with the server people.

OLD BUSINESS: Jack Dickey picked up the two additional panels for Gordy's. One for the

kiosk and one for a new kiosk.

Mary Turpin got a return call regarding the Santa Fe Tank Trap project. She was at school and will return the call.

NEW BUSINESS:

Jack Dickey – the Board is relooking into insurance after receiving information from NMOHVA. The Board is researching feasibility of general and management liability insurance.

Frank - Gordy's Hill – the ribbon cutting will be after the last sign is installed. People invited will be Game & Fish, NMOHVA, and Rio Grande Commission who wrote the recommendation letter for the Club.

Mary Turpin – contacted All for Fun to share the story of Gordy's. Mary is working on getting Gordy's to be a Jeep Badge of Honor for the Trails Off Road app.

Jack Dickey – Election of Officers, president, secretary, and environmental affairs will be vacant. Nominations open at the May meeting and elections at the July meeting.

Richard – watch your emails from the Club. There are emails that are spam. The senders are close but not correct.

Presentation, Jeff Boggs – Beware if your vehicle has a plastic coolant container. It can get brittle and can crack. Not a good thing to happen while out on a trail. Jeff brought a sample.

50/50 raffle \$55.00. Winner Tracy Bakewell, \$27.50. NMOHVA winner Doug Caddell

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. Motion was approved by a majority of members present without discussion. Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

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