

Mike Gray's Letter about JSP Planning for Fall 2005

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Harvest Time in the Sierra Madres is Nearing

When I first approached the villagers in the Sierra Madres and asked what we could do for them, they all said they needed help picking beans. It is hard work. And it is the most important work of the year. Those beans will show up on the table every meal of the day for the next year. As Don Facundo says, "You haven't eaten if you haven't had any beans". A portion will be set aside to plant next summer and the leftover quantity will be sold in town. It is food security and a cash crop.

The harvest usually begins about the first frost and goes till the beans are all in. It usually goes on for about three weeks in late October. Rain sometimes interrupts. You can't pick beans when they are too wet or too dry. Usually we work with a different family each day, picking for a few hours in the morning. The afternoons vary. Sometimes we can be cutting corn stalks, digging potatoes, gathering pumpkins or just hanging out.

We will divide up and stay in the homes of the villagers. We still will have our own kitchen and do our own meals together. You will still get plenty of invitations to eat with villagers. Fresh beans, candied pumpkins, fresh corn ... it is a fine time to visit.

Kind of like Thanksgiving

I had not planned to do a Thanksgiving trip to Desemboque de los Seris, but I have had several requests already. So I'm planning a trip now. I don't know what the work will be yet, I just know there are a few vacation days that week. We will probably go Saturday to Saturday of the Thanksgiving week. We will camp on the beach and take a boat out to one of the islands if the weather permits. We will find something to do.

What about you?

While I go about working out the details (and attend a couple of out-of-state meetings) this month, think about whether you would like to participate on either of these projects. Let me know what will work for you. Both trips will begin and end in Tucson, but the dates are flexible at this time. Our project is intergenerational. We take age 14 and up. Price for the week might hit the \$400 mark because of higher fuel prices.

And maybe...

Someone has floated the idea of going to the gulf coast. I'd say this is a long shot, but I would like to hear from friends if this might be something they would be interested in doing in the future.

In service,

Mike Gray