

## Director brings John Muir film to Moab

By Sharon Sullivan Moab Sun News 4 hrs ago



Filmmaker Michael Conti sets up a camera at Grand Canyon. [Photo courtesy of Heather Boyle]

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### Story Highlights

Watch "The Unruly Mystic: John Muir" at Star Hall

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As a kid growing up in Boulder, Colorado, filmmaker Michael Conti could not quite explain the feeling that overcame him from spending his childhood outdoors.

Until, at age 14, he read John Muir's "My First Summer in the Sierra" which, he said, communicated his sentiments exactly.

Now, Conti has created and directed a 70-minute film called “The Unruly Mystic: John Muir” exploring the life of one of America’s most renowned wilderness defenders. The film is being shown in Moab at Star Hall on Wednesday, April 10.

Doors open at 6 p.m. and producer Heather Boyle will introduce the film before it begins at 7 p.m. Conti will answer questions from the audience after the screening.

The Unruly Mystic: John Muir is Conti’s second in a series of “Unruly Mystic” films about “those who woke us up.”

Muir was an early environmentalist who founded the Sierra Club. He died in 1914, but guided former President Theodore Roosevelt through Yosemite in 1903, helping to further federal protection of public wilderness lands.

Conti said the film discusses the connection between nature and spirituality, with quotations from Muir’s lyrical writings and interviews with a wide range of people influenced by the legendary naturalist. The film is intended to help people connect with and protect nature.

In “My First Summer in the Sierra,” Muir wrote, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

Conti began to work on The Unruly Mystic: John Muir in May 2015, and it screened for the first time in April 2018 in Asheville, North Carolina.

The independent filmmaker has partnered with the Sierra Club to screen the film in some locations, where he shares a portion of ticket proceeds with the environmental organization.

Harold Wood, a retired attorney, volunteers as the webmaster for the Sierra Club’s John Muir Exhibit website. Wood said the film is different than other documentaries made about Muir in that there is more emphasis on the spiritual aspect of Muir’s association with nature.

“He uses his life to give the message that we need to go outdoors,” Wood said. “Muir (famously) said ‘Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.’ His message is even more relevant today.

Wood said the key is to understand that Muir was both a scientist and a poet.

Boyle said “we chose to start our spring tour in Moab because it is an outdoor-oriented community and we thought the film would resonate well with the people there.”

There have been 50 screenings in California, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Conti is planning an East Coast tour in the fall.

The film includes interviews with noted psychiatrists, therapists, theologians, writers and everyday people regarding their relationships with nature and its transformative effect on their lives.

Yosemite National Park Ranger Shelton Johnson requested for Conti bring the film to Yosemite to show to employees still traumatized from the huge fires that occurred there in 2018, resulting in a partial closure of the park.

“We’re going to show the film to park service employees in Yosemite National Park as a healing,” Conti said. The film is being shown at Yosemite National Park on April 16.

Following that, screenings are planned at various locations in Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

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### “The Unruly Mystic: John Muir”

When: Wednesday, April 10; Doors open at 6 p.m.; film starts at 7 p.m.

Where: Star Hall, 159 E. Center St.

Cost: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, \$8 for students 17 and under

Info: Tickets may be purchased by visiting [www.tinyurl.com/muirfilm](http://www.tinyurl.com/muirfilm) or at the door on the day of the show

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