



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

New Mexico
2021: Annual Manager's Report

Prehistoric Trackways

National Monument



Map

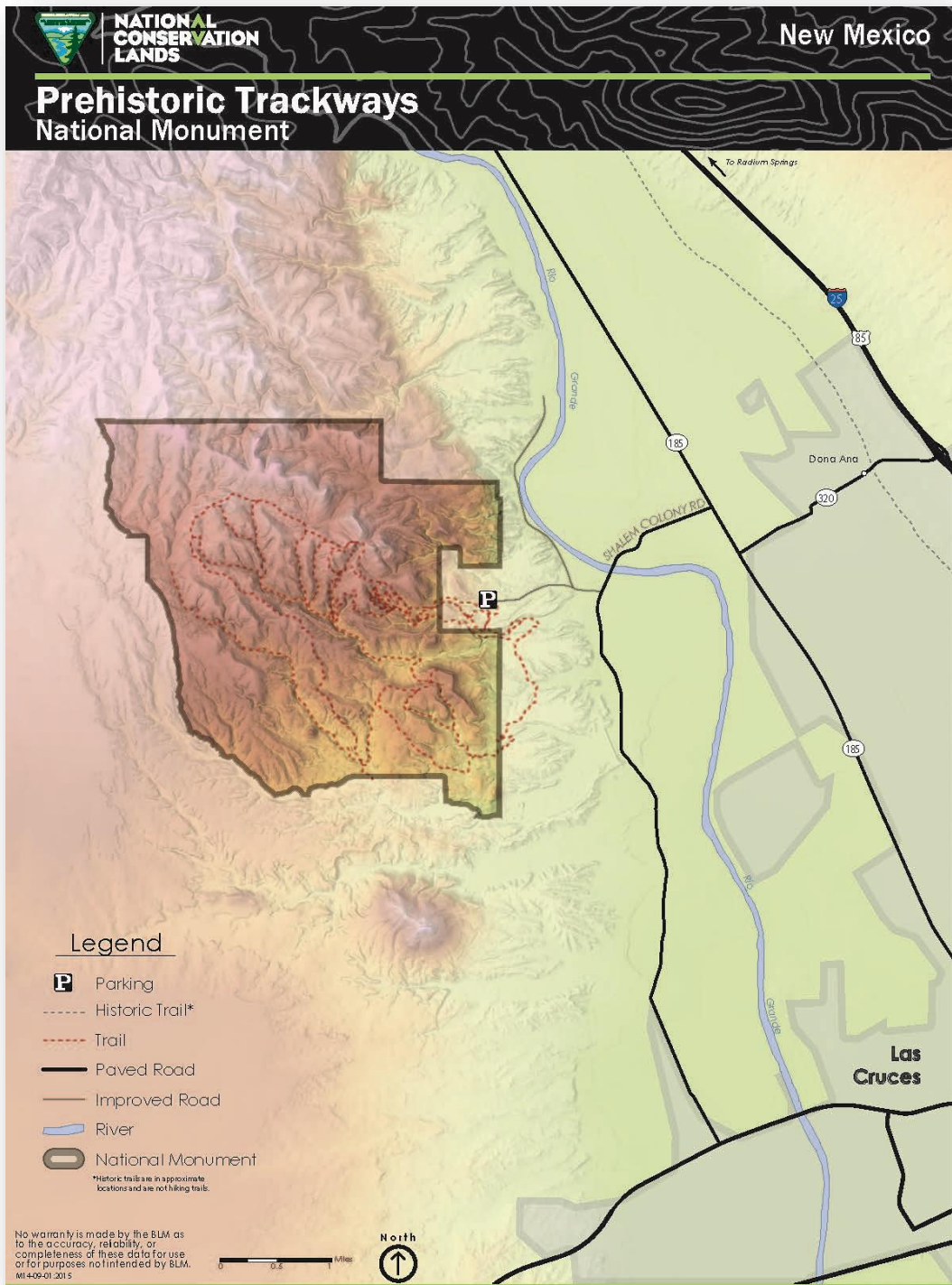


Figure 1. Map of Prehistoric Trackways National Monument northeast of Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Accomplishments

Prehistoric Trackways National Monument (Monument) had many accomplishments this year, despite challenges presented by COVID-19. Park Rangers monitored over 1,600 acres of wilderness and 15 miles of recreation trails. Working with the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance, they also maintained six miles of trail. A Conservation Corps New Mexico trail crew rerouted the Discovery Trail to include a retaining wall to stabilize the trail. Monument staff also signed the boundaries of the Monument.

Over the course of the year, 80 acres were proactively inventoried and surveyed for cultural resources. Proactive cultural surveys are critical in building cultural resource inventories and informing best management practices for cultural resources. During the survey, three new cultural resources were identified and recorded.

Ten acres were proactively surveyed for paleontological resources within the Monument by the monument paleontologist, primarily in areas mapped as the Permian Apache Dam Formation. Nine fossil localities were recorded, noting occurrences of vertebrate trackways, invertebrate burrowing trace fossils, uncommon nautiloids, and other marine invertebrates.

One new paleontological resource locality was assessed for impacts from natural and man-made impacts. Repeat photography stations were established. Twenty-four previously assessed localities were revisited. Three sites are rated poor: L0002 Discovery Site for the increased erosion and theft from increased visitation, L0053 (Site Black) for increased degradation of in-situ petrified wood in the road, and an additional site that was vandalized and not yet mitigated. All the other paleontological sites monitored were experiencing normal rates of erosion

The recreation area management plan for the Monument was finalized and signed at the end of January 2021. A funding request was submitted for FY22 to work with a contractor on a design plan for the enhancement of recreation facilities at the trailhead and parking areas of the Monument. Enhancements would include paving parking lots, pit toilets, shade structures, and educational and interpretive signage.

Three compliance inspections were done to ensure cattle grazing was being managed appropriately by permittees. Grazing bills were issued on time for the Altamira and Picacho Peak Allotments. The grazing year starts March 1st and ends February 28th. Picacho Peak is actual use billing, meaning they pay fees per actual cow grazed. The

Altamira Allotment is billed at the start of every grazing year, for the full capacity of their grazing permit allotments.

The Las Cruces District Office Operations Division completed extensive work on the access road to PTNM as part of the Great American Outdoors Act. Permian Tracks Road is the developed access road for Prehistoric Trackways National Monument that received an estimated total visitation of 46,238 visitors in fiscal year 2021. This access road connects the public to 23 miles of primitive roads and 15 miles of non-motorized trails and provides access to the Discovery Site trailhead. The Permian Trackways Road repair project (\$189,000) identified safety issues with the primary access road leading into the Monument creating opportunities for viewing trackway fossils, hiking, horseback riding, and off-highway vehicle driving. The project reconstructed an aggregated road surface and arroyo crossing ensuring better public access by passenger vehicles and school buses.



Figure 2. Las Cruces District Office staff install articulating mats as portion of road improvement project at PTNM. BLM photo.

Challenges

With increased visitation and use by off highway vehicles and recreational campers for dispersed camping, parking has become an issue on weekends due to the small size of the parking lots.

Cattle were getting out due to a damaged fence and getting in yards around the Rocky Acre Trails neighborhood. An inspection was completed with the ranch hand, and it was determined where the issue was coming from. The information was passed on to realty for a possible trespass from a landowner who damaged a fence.

Picacho Peak Allotment, partially on the Monument, did have an influx of recreationists due to COVID-19. The influx of recreationist caused damage to fences by cutting them and cattle were getting in yards around Barcelona Ridge Road, causing damage to landscapes.

Wilderness monitoring and patrolling by staff has shown increased use off the Permian Reef Road in the northwest portion of the Robledo Mountains Wilderness Area. The area is a popular camping spot where vehicles will park and build campfire rings. During patrolling, staff have broken up fire rings and collected trash as well as ensure that Wilderness boundary signage was still in place.



Figure 3. Northeast PTNM boundary looking toward the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. BLM photo.

Visitors

Despite ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, PTNM’s visitation increased in 2021 with an estimated 46,238 visits.

Table 1. Visitation for Prehistoric Trackways National Monument 2018-2021.

Fiscal Year	Visitation Totals
*2018	12,023
2019	19,230
2020	43,841
2021	46,238

*Although PTNM was established in 2009, visitation was recorded as a monument unit beginning 2018.

Throughout 2021, OMDPNM continued to offer educational and interpretive resources on public lands by sharing video and written content on social media. During patrol duties, park rangers continued to search for opportunities to educate the public on outdoor ethics, regulations, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and the natural cultural, and recreational resources of the area.



Figure 4. Hikers on the Ridgeline Trail. BLM Photo.

Partnerships

For FY 2021, the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (Friends) continued to work closely with BLM staff in providing outreach and educational services to the visiting public, to include Prehistoric Trackways National Monument.

The working relationship between BLM staff and the Friends group grew significantly with the startup of a program to train volunteers as docents. The docents will lead interpretive hikes on Prehistoric Trackways National Monument. Volunteers received the National Association of Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Guide Training. Interpretive hikes are expected to occur on a regular basis for FY 2022. This relationship is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

Science

No known research occurred within the Monument in FY 2021. A planned paleontological field visit by researchers from New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science was postponed until FY22. Paleontological monitoring and inventorying were ongoing and conducted regularly by the Monument paleontologist. Scientific research continued to be managed under the guidance of the Monument science plan which was completed in 2020.

Paleontological monitoring in the Monument included five localities which were revisited for repeat photography. Three of these were known localities in the "Abo Tongue of the Apache Dam Formation" exposed in an old quarry just south of PTNM in the Robledo Mountains, and the other two were west of and/or near the Robledo Mountains Wilderness Area boundary.

Climate Impacts

The local environment of Prehistoric Trackways National Monument increasingly shows the impacts of changing climatic conditions. An increase in temperatures over the course of the last century, a reduction of annual spring precipitation, and an increase in the severity of multiyear droughts has affected the areas ecology. Changing climatic conditions on the Monument are anticipated to decrease grazing resources for livestock, threaten the viability of the Monument's flora and fauna ecological diversity, and increase the severity of wildfires over time. Drier winters, increasing temperatures, and shorter/more isolated monsoonal rainfall are expected to continue.

Climate Resiliency

There were no actions taken during the fiscal year pertaining to bolstering the Monument's climate resiliency.

Social and Environmental Justice

Monument staff are including English and Spanish text on informative and interpretive panels throughout the Monument. The Monument also collaborates with local non-governmental groups who focus on interpretive and educational efforts for underserved communities.

Events

Due to COVID-19 restrictions events held at PTNM were down from previous years. Monument staff conducted 13 outreach events. These events, including guided hikes, volunteer clean-ups, field trips and community presentations, educated the public about the unique paleontology values and resource protection of the Monument. The events included a Sunset Outdoor Cooking Series. Partnering with the Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science, Monument staff hosted virtual events and social media posts for the celebration of National Fossil Day. The Friends' docents conducted four pilot hikes in preparation of starting their Docent Program for FY 2022.

For the National Fossil Day event in October 2020, we partnered with Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science. To honor National Fossil Day BLM gave the Museum magnets, posters, BLM Dinosaur coloring posters, Junior Ranger books and wooden badges to give out to the public. The Museum then added these supplies to activity-bags that parents could pick up via a drive-through kiosk. All 100 prepared bags were shared with the public.



Figure 5. Volunteers at the Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science are ready to pass out National Fossil Day activity bags in October 2020. Photo Credit: SHawkins/MoNas.



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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/blmnewmexico/albums/72157630067551446>

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