

BLM New Mexico  
Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Cultural Heritage Program Report

Prepared by:  
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## **FY 2023 Major Highlights for BLM New Mexico Cultural Resources Program**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico State Office (NMSO) is responsible for managing the cultural resources program for its public lands in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas. The proactive component of the program is primarily focused on the public surface estate, but also includes outreach and education efforts in areas outside of New Mexico where the bulk of BLM's management responsibilities are for federal mineral estate. The highlights reported here focus on BLM's proactive management of cultural resources as well as its' responsibilities under cultural resources authorities beyond Section 106 compliance requirements. Our proactive efforts supported the Secretary of Interior's priorities over the entirety of FY2023. The priorities supported by our work focus on identifying steps to accelerate responsible development of renewable energy on public lands and waters, strengthening the government-to-government relationship with sovereign Tribal Nations, making investments to support the Administration's goal of creating millions of family-supporting and union jobs, working to conserve at least 30% each of our lands and waters by the year 2030, and centering equity and environmental justice.

Conservation stewardship is an important aspect of BLM proactive management of cultural resources, which range include archaeological sites, historic buildings, and traditional cultural places, to the artifact collections from those important resources. Due to the density of significant cultural resources across the public lands in New Mexico, effective management of these sites, including monitoring, protection, and stabilization, helps keep areas open for recreation opportunities. To this end, BLM NM-OK-TX-KS engages in a range of activities such as monitoring sites, mitigating vandalism, educating the public and industry, collecting baseline inventory data, maintaining access to interpreted sites, maintaining stabilized ruins, tribal consultation, and managing collections to ensure they are accessible to tribes, the public and researchers.

This report focuses on highlights related to cultural resources management (proactive archeological surveys, projects with significant workloads), paleontology, museum collections management, cultural resources data sharing and management, and Tribal partnerships or consultations pertinent to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), cultural heritage, and museum collection. With the introduction of new NAGPRA regulations expected early in 2024, BLM New Mexico placed a priority on identifying the entirety of its responsibilities related to NAGPRA collections in FY2023.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Jarrod X Kellogg, Acting Deputy Preservation Officer, at [jkellogg@blm.gov](mailto:jkellogg@blm.gov) or 307-261-7596.

## Cultural Resources

### **Boothill Road Closure-Carlsbad Field Office (CFO)**

Currently managed as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and proposed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), the Boothill Archaeology site/area contains significant archeological resources which have been subjected to a high amount of vandalism and looting. Archeologists spent 15+ years working with BLM LEOs and county sheriffs to patrol the area and document any looting and work toward closing a county road which has allowed the vandalism to increase. After working with Eddy County, Mescalero Apache Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) Holly Houghton, and BLM range staff, CFO archeologist Aaron Whaley was able to successfully close and reclaim the road in question, increasing protection to cultural resources in the area (Photos 1-2)



Photo 1 (left) showing county road after ripping for restoration; Photo 2 (right) show post-restoration results after seeding and revegetation.

### **Farmington/Mancos Resource Management Plan Amendment Programmatic Agreement Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS)**

This RMPA/EIS is a planning effort with the BLM and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Navajo Regional Office as co-leads. Based on the results of new exploration, coupled with new technology, the EIS analyses the potential for new oil and gas extraction in the San Juan Basin, an area previously believed to have been fully developed in relation to fossil fuels. The BLM and BIA organized combination in-person/virtual meetings in October 2022 and May 2023 on the EIS, which as of October 2023 is in the “Draft Proposed Final” stage, awaiting completion of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) before final reviews and publication. The PA is being developed in collaboration with 25 potentially impacted Tribes and Pueblos. The PA will outline how the BLM and BIA will

enforce Section 106 for future oil and gas undertakings throughout the planning area as authorized by the amendment. The PA is designed, with Tribal input, to help streamline government so that all parties have a clear understanding of the process and how to resolve any concerns.

Although the PA has been in development since 2019, progress slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic as Tribes shifted their focus to caring for their communities. As of November 2023, the PA is nearly complete with the agencies and collaborators reviewing the final version. The PA will be distributed for signature among the signatories and implemented once the Record of Decision (ROD) is signed for the RMPA.

The PA strengthens Government-to-Government relations by recognizing important Tribal perspectives regarding the richness of the cultural landscapes of which BLM manages a portion of and ensuring they have a consistent role in assisting BLM with managing those lands.

### **Whiptail Trails Club Summer Girls Camp at Three Rivers-Las Cruces District Office (LCDO)**

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, LCDO Archaeologist Trinity Miller led an interpretive tour of the Three Rivers Petroglyph Site to a group of 12-14 year old girls, teaching them about Jornada Mogollon archaeology, site etiquette, southern New Mexico rock imagery, traditional plant use, and atlatl hunting technology. This event was part of the Whiptail Trails Club Summer Girls Camp organized by BLM NM intern Victoria Rios from June 26-30, 2023. BLM partnered with the Public Lands Interpretive Association (PLIA) and Conservation Corps New Mexico (CCNM) to empower young people to explore public lands by providing recreation access and opportunities to underserved youth in rural areas of southern New Mexico. The camp was free to participants and included overnight camping experiences, ranger and specialist led tours, and visits to local museums.

This year the camp focused on serving the community of Alamogordo. According to Victoria, “The most rewarding part of the program was knowing that the girls felt seen and heard in their community. The friendships I saw built and the long-lasting memories made. Our program allowed the girls inclusion and hands-on experience with the world and culture around them offered here in our beautiful southwest public lands”. Victoria plans to continue work in the future with the communities and school districts of Hatch, Deming, Tularosa, and Alamogordo to provide additional field trip opportunities to LCDO recreation sites. Victoria adds, “Through this program development I hope to encourage a continuation of outreach to the rural communities we serve and our partners in inspiring the next generation of land stewards”.

**Proactive Peña Blanca Survey for the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (OMDPNM RMP/EIS)**

As part of the development of the OMDPNM-RMP-EIS, the LCDO conducted a proactive Section 110 archeological survey assessing the cultural resources in the Peña Blanca area of the Monument. The area takes its name Peña Blanca, a peak overlooking the entirety of the southern area of the Organ Mountains that is composed of Cueva volcanic tuff (Photos 3-4).

Thanks to its geology and geography the Peña Blanca area became home to numerous rock shelters with occupation dating between the Middle Archaic Period and the El Paso Phase of the Jornada Mogollon Formative Period. In the 1980s, New Mexico State University (NMSU) carried out subsurface testing and excavations at several rock shelters that produced important data regarding the introduction and cultivation of maize in the American Southwest. Although a 2018 survey by NMSU covered a significant portion of the area that had previously been subjected to excavation, a sizable portion of the Pena Blanca area remained unsurveyed for cultural resources.

The proactive survey resulted in the recording of 13 new sites including several rock shelters eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and historic water control features that may have been constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The survey also documented impacts to the resources from recreational activities including bouldering and camping. The information gathered will be used to codify objectives and management alternatives within the Monument RMP/EIS to support the conservation and protection of cultural resources.



Photo 3 (left): Enhanced photos of pictographs found within the Monument. Photo 4 (right): Overview of a portion of the Pena Blanca.

### **Socorro Field Office (SFO) Interpretative Events**

SFO archeologists conducted multiple interpretative events throughout FY2024. Staff presented a lecture to school children about the importance of cultural resource preservation on public lands during the annual Bosque Days. Archeologists also led a tour of Fort Craig, built during the 1850s and used into the 1890s, to military personnel stationed at Fort Bliss. This tour was part of a staff ride discussing the siege of the fort and the nearby Battle of Valverde, both of which occurred during the Civil War as part of the Confederacy's invasion of New Mexico in 1862.

### **Damage Assessment of La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs Vandalism-Taos Field Office (TFO)**

Located just outside of Santa Fe, the La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs contain evidence of over 8,000 years of occupation by Archaic and Puebloan groups and is considered sacred by several local Native American communities. Multiple instances of vandalism at the site in FY2022 required the completion of four separate archeological damage assessment reports and investigations under the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). This entry discusses one such instance of vandalism which was reported to the TFO on January 17, 2022.

Initial investigation of the reported vandalism by BLM law enforcement and archeologists revealed that multiple rocks and petroglyph panels had been spray painted purple. For a site to be considered eligible for listing in the NRHP, it must retain a level of integrity to convey its significance. The spray-painted graffiti has adversely affected the integrity of the site and required immediate mitigation measures. TFO archeologists and staff consequently removed all paint not located on petroglyph panels and in consultation with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (NMSHPO) and local Native American Tribes the TFO placed an art conservator under contract to remove the paint placed over any petroglyphs. The removal is currently scheduled for November 2023.

One of the various articles written by local news agencies about the vandalism can be found here:

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/la-cieneguilla-petroglyphs-suffer-graffiti-damage/article\\_f1895450-7d5b-11ec-b6f2-23b738f5896e.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/la-cieneguilla-petroglyphs-suffer-graffiti-damage/article_f1895450-7d5b-11ec-b6f2-23b738f5896e.html)

### **A Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for Three Proposed Shooting Range Localities, Santa Fe County, New Mexico**

The BLM, along with local and state partners, is attempting to resolve increasing conflicts associated with unrestricted recreational target shooting on public lands in three areas within Santa Fe County: Buckman, Camel Tracks, and the San Pedro Mountains. To provide for the safety and enjoyment of public lands by all users, including those seeking safe opportunities for

target shooting, the parties have proposed the construction of three shooting ranges in the locations (Photo 5).

To help achieve this, TFO archeologists Chris Anderson and Cameron Cox conducted Class III surveys inventorying a total of 62.78 acres of BLM land. Consultation with Tribes was initiated and an invitation to participate in fieldwork was extended to those who expressed interest in participating in further work, including the Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Kewa, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Clara, and Tesuque, the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Comanche Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and the Navajo Nation.

During investigation seven new archaeological sites were identified and two previously recorded sites were revisited. Four of the sites are recommended as eligible for listing in the NRHP, one site remains unevaluated and requires testing, and one site has been recommended as not eligible. One previously recorded site, LA 112861, was previously determined as eligible for listing in the NHRP and remains eligible pending testing. The other previously recorded site is LA 105922, a segment of the old Santa Fe to Albuquerque road that is still in use. Eligibility of LA 105922 remains undetermined.

During consultation with the NMSHPO on the area of potential effects (APE), the TFO was requested to consider auditory effects to the La Cieneguilla petroglyph site from the proposed Camel Tracks location. TFO Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) Justin Dean and Richard Sablan assisted in this assessment by conducting a live fire exercise, with additional assistance from BLM Fire in the form of three wildland firefighters and an engine for safety and fire protection.



Photo 5: Grooved axe found during shooting range surveys.

# Paleontology

## *Return of Monthly Guided Cultural and Paleontological Hikes-LCDO*

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, LCDO staff resumed monthly guided hikes around Prehistoric Trackways National Monument (PTNM) and the OMDPNM in January 2023. These hikes offered public visitors a guided tour of some of the Monuments' most scenic areas as well provide them with insightful educational information related to the natural and cultural resources of the land.

Paleontologist Colin Dunn offered monthly hikes to the Discovery Site in the PTNM. Colin offered visitors a view into the deep geologic history of the Monument and an opportunity to learn about the world-renowned trace fossils made by critters that inhabited the Las Cruces before the dinosaurs over 286 million years ago. Of particular interest, participants could view the footprints of a Dimetrodon, one of the larger synapsids, or mammal-like reptiles, that lived during the Permian Period.

Archaeologist Garrett Leitermann led guided hikes monthly to several areas within the OMDPNM (Photo 6). On a rotating monthly basis, participants could learn about the history of mining in the Organ Mountains at Fillmore Canyon, hear the story of the bitter feud of Eugene Van Patten and Dr. Boyd at Dripping Springs, find out about the life and murder of the El Hermitano at La Cueva, and explore prehistoric rock shelters at Peña Blanca. The newest addition to the guided cultural hike offerings is focused on the newly designated Butterfield National Historic Trail and Civilian Conservation Corps sites near the Picacho Peak Recreation Area.



Photo 6: LCDO archeologist Garrett Leitermann Garrett Leiterman speaking during a guided hike to Peña Blanca. A red abstract/geomorphic pictograph visible on the wall in the background.



## **Direct Hire Authority (DHA) Paleo Resource Interns Fossil Teaching Collection-LCDO**

BLM Headquarters funded two DHA interns through GeoCorps America for LCDO to organize and curate the existing fossil teaching collection of early Permian trace fossils from PTNM and the surrounding vicinity. The teaching collection had accumulated over the decades but contained no labeling or other organization to it usable by current staff. The interns spent their 11-week stints determining what fossils in the collection could be identified and used in interpretive events, as well as collecting more examples of ichnotaxa, which are the fossilized remains of activities done by living organisms such as burrows. The fossils were labeled and nested in museum quality acid free boxes for their protection during use at public education events.

## **Cultural Resources Data Management Activities**

### **Cultural Resources Data Management in New Mexico**

BLM New Mexico hired several interns throughout the state to support the BLM's National Cultural Resource Information Management System (NCRIMS) geodatabase. The interns were hired primarily through an assistance agreement with the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC) to digitize archeological survey reports and site records, in addition to populating GIS data into the NCRIMS.

Felicia Luna and Anastasia Walhovd digitized over 3,500 documents at the LCDO relating to cultural resource survey reports from past fiscal years. Towards the end of their internship in May 2023 they were able to conduct quality assurance and control (QA/QC) on, and digitize, over 300 site boundaries into NCRIMS. Felicia and Anastasia supported BLM LCDO cultural staff in other ways during their internships by assisting in fieldwork and developing educational materials for the public.

The LCDO also received a cut of NCRIMS data from BLM HQ representing all site and survey polygons stored in the New Mexico Cultural Resource Information System (NMCRIS), which contains cultural resources information for all of New Mexico. With the help of the GIS staff, over 10,000 GIS polygons were incorporated into the LCDO's local NCRIMS layer. This data cut has saved hundreds of hours that would have otherwise been spent hand digitizing site and survey polygons from report maps. It is estimated that the remaining NCRIMS work for the LCDO involves the QA/QC of the GIS data cut from HQ, relabeling and organizing 4,500 digitized site forms from a previous contract, and digitizing any remaining paper site forms or cultural resource reports.

Interns throughout the state also worked on incorporating data into NCRIMS. Klairce Hubbard digitized site records and survey reports held at the NMSO in Santa Fe, an intern at the CFO assisted in GIS data incorporation, and funding was obligated to ALCC to hire an additional

intern in FY2024 to be placed at either the LCDO or Roswell Field Office (RFO). Garrett Leitermann, who oversaw the work of the interns at the LCDO, also served as Program Officer on the ALCC agreement and provided support to interns throughout the state.

The NMSO also completed a new one-year contract with the Archeological Resources Management System (ARMS), a branch of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. In addition to holding records of cultural resources survey and archeological sites, the ARMS also maintains the NMCRIS, an online tool used by cultural resources professionals to conduct desktop GIS investigations to determine the presence, or potential for, cultural resources in any given location regardless of land ownership or management status. This is essential in instances where the BLM is the lead agency for undertakings on non-BLM managed land.

## **Tribal Partnerships and Consultations Pertinent to Cultural Heritage, Museum Collections, and/or NAGPRA**

### **NAGPRA Repatriation at New Mexico State University's (NMSU) University Museum**

Since October of 2021 the LCDO has worked with the University Museum at NMSU to coordinate the repatriation of NAGPRA collections to descendant Tribes. Consultation meetings to discuss the repatriation efforts were held between NMSU, Federally Recognized Tribes, and involved federal agencies on October 13th, 2021, December 7th, 2021, and April 26th, 2022.

After the consultation meetings the LCDO coordinated with NMSU to develop a joint Notice of Inventory Completion (NIC) for publication in the Federal Register (88FR2129 and 88FR11931, as amended) in February 2023. The NIC detailed the nature and number of the ancestors and their belongings in the custody and/or control of the University Museum, the BLM, the Gila and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, and served as an official legal notice for culturally affiliated Tribes to put submit a request for repatriation.

The BLM received a formal request from Mescalero Apache THPO Holly Houghton for the repatriation of all ancestors and their belongings that originated from lands managed by the LCDO. The Mescalero Apache Tribe is identified within the Federal Register notice as one of the Federally Recognized Tribes that is culturally affiliated with the Ancestors and their belongings as described in the notice. The BLM accepted the Mescalero Apache Tribe's request for repatriation and intends to transfer legal interest in the NAGPRA collections to the Mescalero Apache Tribe and will come together with the Pueblo of Zuni, NMSU, and the BLM to reinter the ancestors with their belongings in early FY2024.

### **Relationship Building with Tribes at LCDO**

In addition to the previously discussed repatriation, the LCDO engaged in several proactive consultations and meetings with Tribes to strengthen existing rapport. LCDO regularly conducts government to government consultation regularly with 13 Federally Recognized Tribes in Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana counties. Consultation is done on a county by county basis and based on Tribal land claims, a New Mexico Historic Preservation ethnographic study, the National Park Service's Native American Consultation Database, and Tribes who ask to be consulted for certain projects as necessary.

To ensure that consultation was inclusive of all Tribes wishing to be contacted for undertakings in the six county area the LCDO sent out letters to several tribes including the Pueblos of Acoma, Isleta, Laguna, Zuni, the Hopi Tribe, and the San Carlos Apache Tribe. Archeologist Cody Dalpra took lead in developing the proactive letter and following up with appropriate Tribal contacts to inquire about their interest in being consulted for federal undertakings in specific counties.

In the spring, LCDO line officers, their designees, and resource specialists met twice with the Mescalero Apache Tribal Council and Tribal employees at their offices in Mescalero, NM to proactively discuss projects and coordination for the upcoming year. The first meeting was to discuss upcoming federal undertakings that the Tribe may be interested in being consulted on, including the ongoing development of the OMDPNM and Tri-County Resource RMPs. The second meeting at Mescalero discussed the RMP process more in depth with Tribal Council.

As part of proactive planning, the LCDO has produced, through a contracted Class III cultural resources survey, an Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) Report to help the LCDO determine if proposed renewable energy projects located near Lordsburg, NM will have potential adverse impacts to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST). This established an ongoing monitoring plan for the trail and gathered data for future planning efforts such as trail management corridors or RMPs. LCDO has also initiated correspondence and communication with both Federally and non-Federally Recognized Tribes, the latter as interested or concerned parties, to develop a cultural landscape study of the CDNST area. This work is currently on-going.

### **Locating and Mapping Ancestral Wichita Allotment Homesteads/Tribal Partnerships**

The BLM awarded a grant to the University of Oklahoma, who is partnering with the Wichita & Affiliated Tribes, to investigate Allotment period sites in the Sugar Creek drainage near Anadarko, Oklahoma. This project will document Wichita settlements and produce a criterion and set of methods that the BLM and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) can share with other archeologists to ensure these sites are properly recorded.

Four principal objectives motivate the proposed investigation of allotments along the Sugar Creek drainage: 1) locate and record 19th and 20th century farmsteads, camps, and dance grounds on Wichita allotted lands; 2) identify and document any other Precontact and Postcontact sites within the survey area; 3) record oral histories from Tribal members and landowners about these sites, and; 4) develop best practices for identifying and fully documenting allotment-era archaeological sites (Photos 7-8).

The BLM is establishing the foundation for a positive relationship with the Wichita & Affiliated Tribes with early Tribal input to help develop methods to avoid or reduce effects to significant areas. This agreement has also laid the framework to forming collaborations for similar projects with other Tribes and universities.



Photo 7: Michael Krause (left) of the University of Oklahoma recording artifacts. Photo 8 (right): Carla Klehm, Malcolm Williamson, and Wolfgang Alders of the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies at the University of Arkansas flying a LiDAR drone during surveys.

### **Chacoan Outlier Field Visit with Members of the Pueblo of Acoma**

On April 12, 2023, Pueblo of Acoma members joined BLM volunteers and a Rio Puerco Field Office archaeologist to visit important Chacoan outlier communities north of Prewitt in McKinley County, specifically Casamero Pueblo, Big Al Petroglyphs, and the Andrews Community. This specialist-to-specialist coordination was meant to foster relationship building and cooperation with Tribes outside of BLM requirements for consultation under the NHPA and

the NEPA. The sharing of Tribal knowledge and interpretation with BLM archaeologists is invaluable to understanding and protecting cultural resources. The goodwill and relationships developed during such informal outings will improve future government-to-government consultation efforts.



Photo 9: Casamero Pueblo

### **Return of Operation Cerberus Items to Tribes**

Between 2007 and 2013, law enforcement from the BLM and other agencies carried out Operation Cerberus, an undercover investigation that resulted in the recovery of over 100,000 artifacts illegally obtained or collected from federal lands located primarily in the Southwest and Four Corners region. While some artifacts had provenience, the responsibility for identification, cataloging, curation, and final disposition of artifacts without such information fell to the BLM.

After several years of research, most artifacts seized during the Cerberus Operation have been identified as to origin and most likely Tribal affiliation. Artifacts seized during such an operation that are known to be from Indian lands and do not fall under the NAGPRA repatriation requirements may be returned to Tribes under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). In 2023, the Rio Puerco Field Office completed the return of 13 total items confiscated during Cerberus to the Pueblos of Acoma, Zia, Jemez, Santo Domingo, and the Hopi Tribe.