

**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

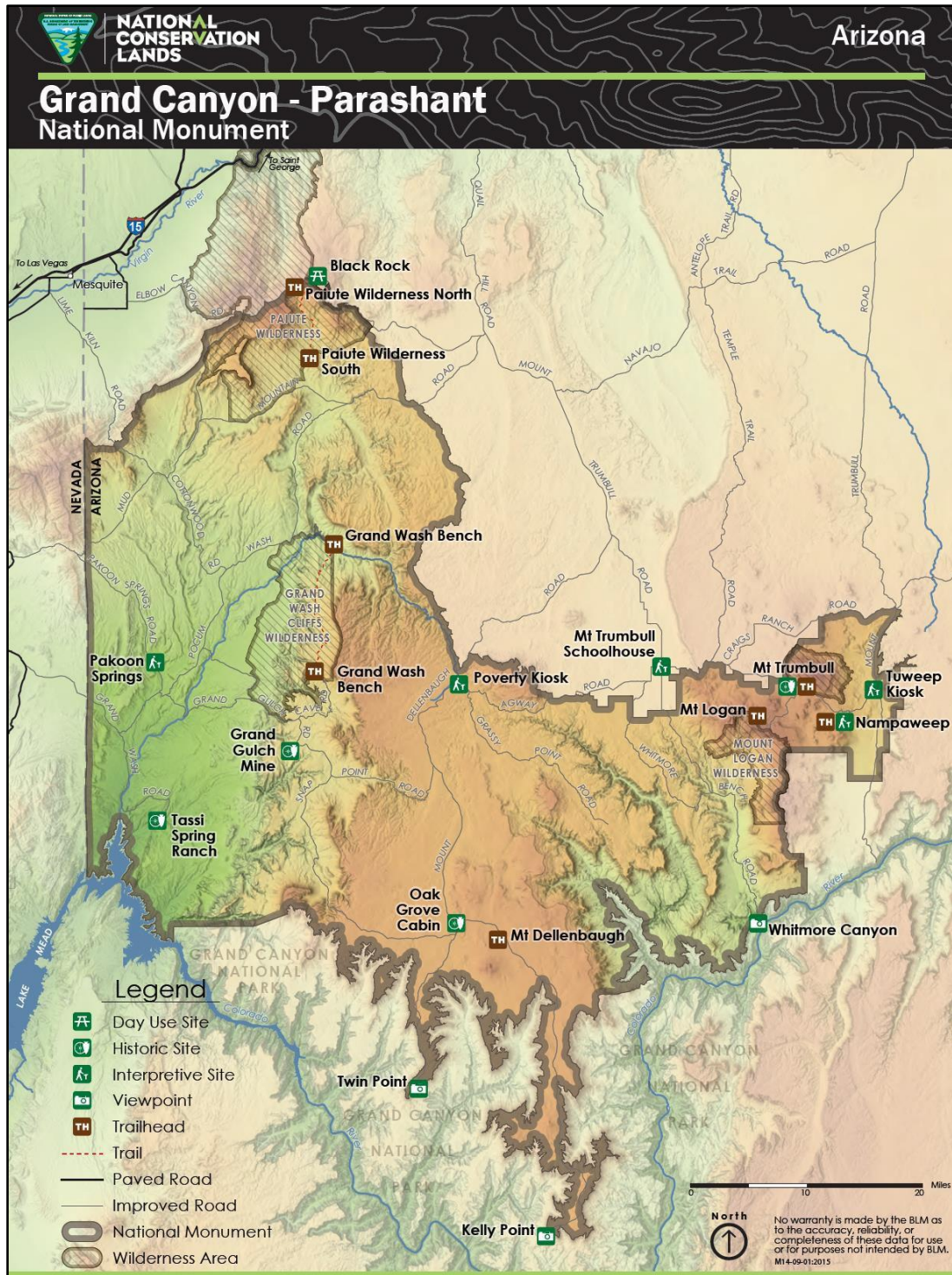
Arizona
2023: Annual Manager's Report

Grand Canyon-Parashant

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

The Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Monument) had many accomplishments this year, a few of which are listed below.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, the Monument began implementing their large-scale Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) project detailed in the *Shivwits Plateau Landscape Restoration Project* (SPLRP) Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-A030-2021-0005-EA). As part of the first-year implementation, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) obligated approximately \$2.6 million dollars in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding to conduct cultural inventories for prioritized SPLRP treatment units and to inventory the remaining treatment units from the previous *Uinkaret Mountain Landscape Restoration Project* (DOI-BLM-AZ-A030-2013-0001-EA).

Nine contracts for a total of 36,633 acres were awarded between January and September 2023. As of February 1, 2024, five of the contracts totaling 15,187 acres have been completed with the remainder due to be completed by September 2024. The five completed contracts documented 443 new sites and redocumented 71 previously recorded sites. One hundred sixty-eight of these sites are deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



As part of the IVM mentioned above, numerous projects in the implementation phase were completed in FY 2023. Approximately 2,660 acres were treated by a variety of methods which included:

- Mastication of 340 acres and 324 acres of manual lop and scatter, both targeting pinyon-juniper encroachment,
- Pre-emergent herbicide application along 100 acres of roadsides in the Mojave Desert to prevent invasive species growth create fuel breaks to reduce fire return,
- Prescribed fire of 1,890 acres of in the Ponderosa Pine ecosystem.

Additionally, the Monument's Science Plan was completed in collaboration with the National Park Service.



Challenges

The Arizona Strip District, which includes the Monument, has some of the most remote and rugged landscapes in the lower 48 states. Access is generally gained by utilizing four main Mohave County roads. Further access can be attained by then utilizing BLM and National Park Service (NPS) maintained roads. In addition to the increased amount of visitors utilizing UTVs and increasing storm impacts, road problems have compounded to the point where access is limited in certain areas due to deteriorated road conditions. It is a challenge for the BLM and local agencies to retain staff adequate to maintain and repair the thousands of miles of roads crossing the area.



Visitors

Due to increased precipitation during the winter season in the high country, visitation decreased in 2023, with an estimated 87,398 visitors and 159,858 visitor days. This estimate is based on an array of traffic and trail counters across the Monument as well as site sign-in locations. Many visitors are public land permittees, either through the grazing program or recreation. Solo hunters and guides are also counted as visitors.



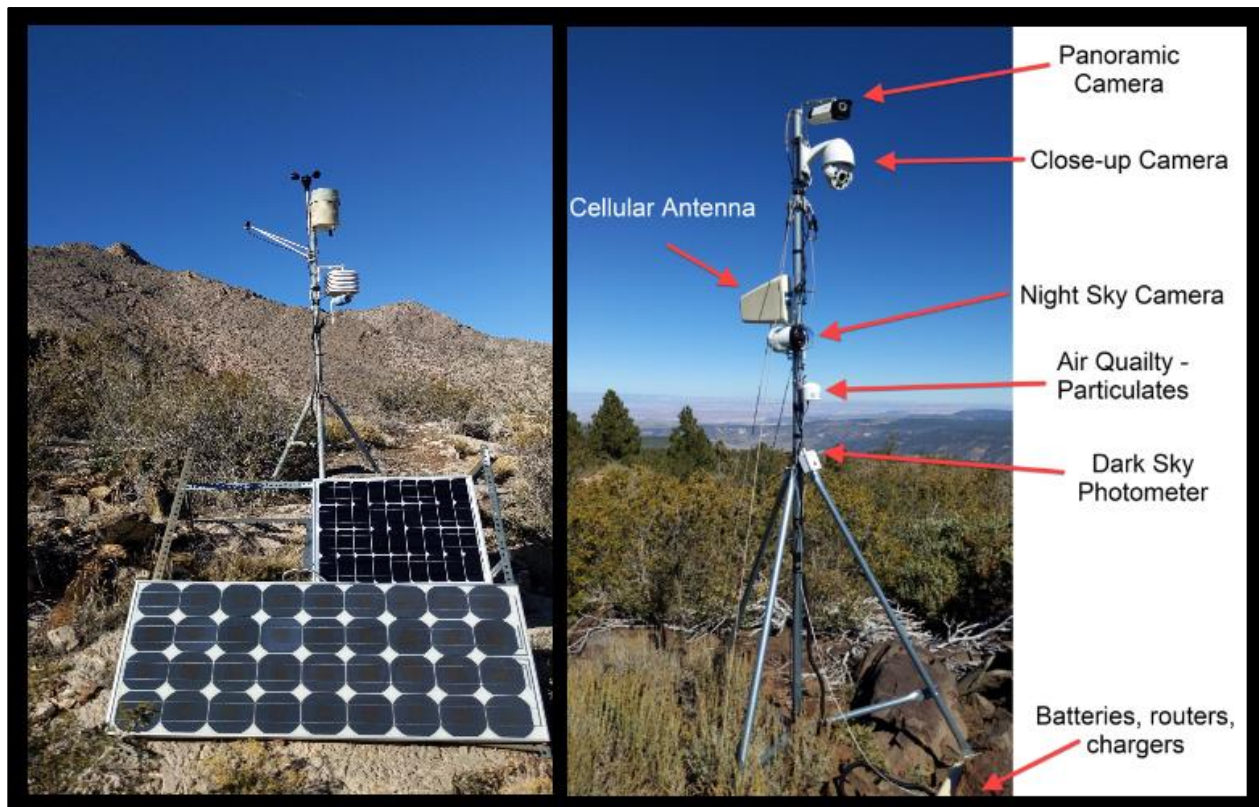
Partnerships

Several partners worked with Monument staff during 2023. The Monument has long been associated with Southern Utah University's Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative (IIC). The IIC receives funding from BLM and NPS through financial agreements to support internships on the Monument. Both Agencies' funds are used to support Monument-wide internships under Service First authority. In 2023, four interns worked on range, ecology, and recreation projects. BLM funding for youth internships that focused on tribes was used to connect the public to tribal cultures. Interns installed new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramps at vault toilets throughout the Monument.



Science

Ongoing monitoring of natural resources continues to be enhanced as more sensors are added to the Monument's ten scientific monitoring stations (SMS), eight of which are online. These SMS sites include soil, air, and precipitation metrics, along with weather and climate. Currently, we are adding more webcams for day and night observations. These nighttime webcams are long exposure, full spectrum, and sensitive to light, allowing for detection of fire or vehicle activity from 20-30 miles away. Four wildfires were detected using the cameras in 2023.



Dark sky monitoring in the Monument has been upgraded with more nighttime cameras. When paired with existing photometers, they provide not just a great science product but also one of interest to our public with the nightly visuals made available online. Overall, dark skies remain largely unchanged while the horizons are seeing more sky glow from expanding urban centers along the Interstate 15 corridor.



Researchers from University of New Mexico (UNM) Albuquerque netted bats at seven locations in the Monument, mostly at sites with high bat activity and known species. Research is centered on identifying microbes present on the bats and the ability of these microbes to repel the fungus causing disease white nose syndrome. Publication of their ten-year efforts is expected in FY 2025.

Climate Impacts

The climate highlight for 2023 was the abundant snow levels. In the three higher elevation portions of the Monument, snow depths were the highest since stations were deployed in 2015. Snow levels which would typically accumulate two to three feet of snow at these elevations saw twice as much in all three locations. The duration of snow cover also increased an additional seven weeks from 2022. Overall, this snow event created increased soil moisture levels benefiting vegetation and wildlife, while also creating some surface runoff erosion on nearby road surfaces.



Events

National Junior Ranger Day

Our interpretive rangers joined with other parks, monuments, and partners at Lake Mead National Recreation Area for National Junior Ranger Day. During the event, staff talked with hundreds of junior rangers and their families about the geology of the area and how volcanoes play such an important role in the formation of our landscapes across the Monument.

Southwest Astronomy Festival

Staff participated in the sixth Annual Southwest Astronomy Festival in partnership with the Red Hills Desert Garden, Cedar Breaks National Monument, and the Saint George Astronomy Group. During the solar viewing at the garden, Monument staff provided information about the sun and scientific exploration of our nearest star while also encouraging visitors to participate in the Dark Sky Junior Ranger program.

Pride Events

We had the opportunity to attend the first Pride event ever hosted in Zion National Park and the Saint George, Utah Pride in the Park event. During these celebratory events, our staff got to meet with families and youth across the area to discuss health and safety for all people in outdoor recreation, jobs and internships within the federal government, and representation of LGBTQ staff members in our workforce. Participants got to meet and talk with our staff while coloring and making wearable buttons showcasing the wildlife of the Monument.



Zion Paleontology Festival

Staff participated in the first Annual Zion Paleontology Festival in partnership with the Zion Forever Project, Saint George Dinosaur Discovery Site, and parks and monuments across the region. During the event, staff shared the BLM geology and fossils junior ranger books with hundreds of junior rangers and their families while talking about dinosaur track formation and identification.



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Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument

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