



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

New Mexico
FY 2023: Annual Manager's Report

Prehistoric Trackways

National Monument



Map

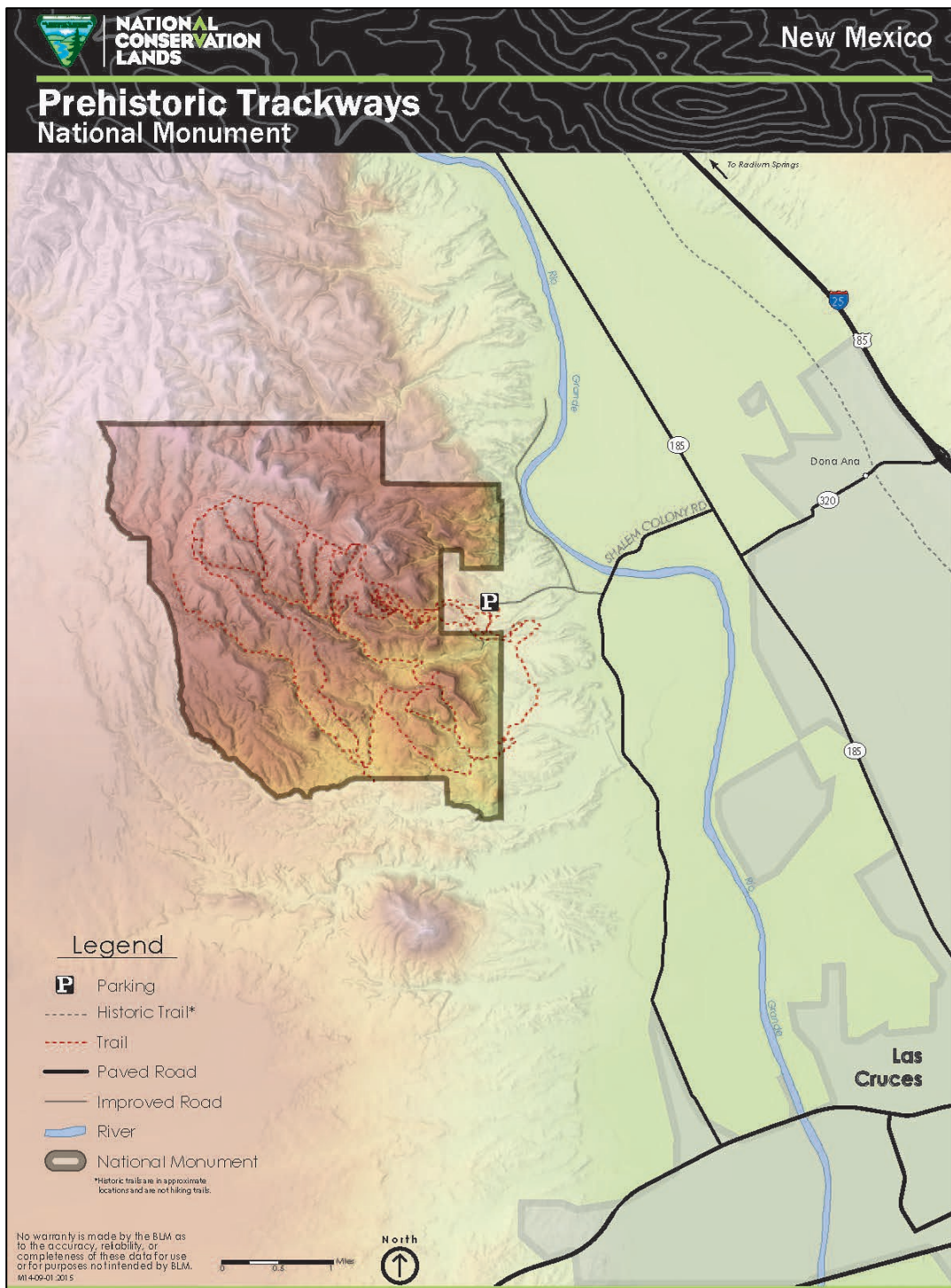


Figure 1. Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Accomplishments

Prehistoric Trackways National Monument (Monument) had many accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2023. Park Rangers monitored more than 1,350 acres of Wilderness and 16 miles of Recreation Trails. Working with the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance, they also maintained six miles of trail. Park Rangers signed the boundaries of the Monument and wilderness areas and informed visitors what activities are allowed within wilderness.

Throughout FY23, Monument staff worked in collaboration with GLHN Architects and Engineering, Inc., to produce construction designs for several recreation improvements on the Monument including paved parking lots, additional interpretative signage, accessible parking and walkways, shaded picnic areas, and vault toilets. The BLM is anticipating acquiring the necessary funds for the construction of the improvements within the next few fiscal years.

Based on field work conducted in 2018, researchers from the University of Calgary published a paper in the journal *Facies* (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10347-022-00658-z>) in December 2022. This research provides additional perspective on the geologic context of the Monument resources.

In FY23 the BIL-funded Community Pit Watershed Restoration Project, located just outside the Monument, was approved for restoration work to begin in FY24. This restoration project will improve safety for visitors to the Monument.

The BLM hosted two direct hire authority internships to work on projects for the monument during the summer for eleven weeks. Supervised by the paleontologist, the two interns organized, identified, labeled, and curated the fossil teaching collection. They also assisted with public events (figure 2).

Four compliance inspections were done to ensure cattle grazing within the Monument was being managed appropriately by permittees. Grazing bills were issued on time for the Altamira and Picacho Peak Allotments. Picacho Peak is actual use billing, meaning this allotment is not billed until after the grazing year; the grazing year runs March 1st to February 28th. At this time, the Altamira allotment is billed annually in the start of the grazing year.



Figure 2. BLM Interns show visitors to PTNM, fossils from the teaching collection.

Challenges

Visitors with larger camping vehicles using the parking lots for camping has become an issue, especially on the weekends due to the limited size parking lots. Unauthorized motorized vehicles using SST Trail, a non-motorized trail, have caused erosional impacts to the trail system as well as damage to other resources in the Monument. Staff is working to add signs to the trail and have plans to conduct remediation work.

The Picacho Peak Allotment, partially in the Monument, continues to see an influx of recreationists. Recreationists have cut fences and removed gates. Cattle have strayed on to private properties around the Picacho Peak subdivision and caused 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 users park vehicles and build campfire rings. During patrolling, staff have broken up fire rings and collected trash and kept wilderness boundary signage in place.

Visitors

The Monument's visitation over the course of FY23 was estimated at 36,605 visitors and was nearly identical to last year's visitation which had an estimated 36,894 visits.

Beginning in December 2022, paleontologist-led guided hikes returned to the Monument. Staff continued to offer educational and interpretive opportunities, like guided hikes, and sharing videos and content through social media. During patrol duties, park rangers continued to educate the public on outdoor ethics, regulations, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the area.



Figure 3. BLM Paleontologist shows visitors a sample of petrified wood during guided hike to the Discovery Site.

Partnerships

The Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks continued to work closely with BLM staff in providing outreach and educational services to the visiting public including for the Monument.

FY23 saw the continuation of the BLM/Friends docent program. Docents, as official BLM volunteers, received interpretive training and program guidance, and volunteer for both groups. Over the course of FY23, the docents led three hikes in the Monument which reached approximately 74 members of the public.

Science

Over the course of the fiscal year the Monument supported the research initiatives of one academic institution. In December 2022, researchers from the University of Calgary published a paper in the journal *Facies* (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10347-022-00658-z>). The focus of the research was on “the acme and demise of the late Palaeozoic ice age (LPIA)” recorded within the strata at the Monument and a site in Austria. In the process, the researchers reexamined the microfossil biostratigraphy at the Monument based on new standards from 2018, which indicates the fossils are older than previously thought (299–289 million years ago).



Figure 4. Facing east from the western PTNM boundary at North Apache Canyon.

Climate Impacts

The local environment of the Monument increasingly shows the impacts of changing climatic conditions including increased temperatures over the course of the last century, a reduction of annual spring precipitation, and an increase in the severity of multiyear droughts. 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.

Climate Resiliency

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

Social and Environmental Justice

The BLM, through its collaboration with the Friends group and with local schools, participated in education and interpretation events focused on youth and students in the community, many of whom are from economically-disadvantaged and minority communities.

Events

Monument staff conducted 13 outreach events on the Monument including guided hikes and clean ups involving the public to educate visitors on the unique paleontology values of the Monument and about resource protection. An additional eight outreach events were conducted off the Monument wherein staff gave talks or presentations to local school groups or for wider public events. Virtual events and social media posts with the public were also produced throughout the year which provided viewers with educational information about the geology, paleontology, and cultural resources of the Monument. Monument staff participated in Fossil Days at a local museum and math and science events at local schools.



Figure 5. BLM/Friend Docent leading a guided hike for the Monument’s “birthday” in March.



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Prehistoric Trackways

National Monument

Las Cruces District Office
Bureau of Land Management
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005
Phone: 575-525-4300

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

Report compiled by:

Jesarey Barela, Natural Resource Specialist
Meredith Dalton, Wildlife Biologist
Colin R. Dunn, Paleontologist
Amber Giove, Park Ranger
Melissa Hovey, Acting Monument Manager
Garrett Leitermann, Archaeologist
Justin Padilla, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Enrico Smith, Park Ranger
Lance Weinbrenner, Park Ranger

The mention of company names, trade names, or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by the federal government.