

BLM New Mexico  
Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Cultural Heritage Program Report

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## Major Highlights of the BLM NM-OK-TX-KS Cultural Resources Program for Fiscal Year 2024

The BLM New Mexico State Office is responsible for managing the cultural resources program for 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 such as Oklahoma 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 decision support (NEPA and Section 106 compliance requirements).

Conservation stewardship is an important aspect of BLM proactive management of cultural resources, including 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 engages in a range of activities such as engaging with the public, monitoring sites, mitigating vandalism, collecting baseline inventory data, maintaining access to interpreted sites, maintaining stabilized ruins, tribal consultation, and managing museum collections.

### Cultural Resources Highlights (Outreach and Education, NHPA 110 and 106, ARPA)

#### *Crossbar Ranch Archaeological Site Backfill Project*

In September 2024, the Oklahoma Field Office (OFO) stabilized site 41PT109 by back-filling looter's pits. The looting occurred in the winter of 2017-2018 and was successfully prosecuted under ARPA in 2021. The site is located in the Cross Bar Management Area near Amarillo, TX. BLM employees from OFO and New Mexico State Office and two interns carried 2 cubic yards of soil to the site over hilly terrain over two days. The choice to hand-carry buckets of soil to the site rather than using UTVs was made to avoid adversely impacting two other sites in the area.



*Figure 1: BLM OFO employees and interns filling bags and buckets with soil to walk to Site 41PT109. From left to Right: Sarah Angeil, OFO Natural Resource Specialist (NRS), Jenny Williams, OFO GIS Archeology Intern, Adrian Escobar, OFO Recreation Planner, Jaden Johnson, NRS*



*Figure 2: BLM employees walking soil to Site 41PT109*

*BLM Las Cruces Monuments Celebrate 10 and 15 Years!*

*Multiple Outreach Events Held by BLM Field Offices throughout New Mexico*

In FY 2024, BLM New Mexico participated in more than 30 outreach and education events including job fairs throughout New Mexico. The events involved many different federal, state, and local partners and reached more than 2,100 people. Highlights from these events follow.

For the second year in a row, the LCDO BLM cultural and recreation staff hosted an expansive archaeological fair at Dripping Springs Natural Area in November 2023. Situated in the scenic Ice Canyon, the fair was a free educational event for the public meant to highlight and celebrate the cultural heritage of Southern New Mexico and West Texas. Visitors to the fair had no shortage of hands-on activities, demonstrations, exhibits, and booths to enjoy over the course of the day. The day's activities included adobe bricking making, atlatl throwing, a petroglyphs in plaster activity, wool spinning demonstrations, a blacksmith display, and much more.





*Figure 3: A view of the U.S. Lincoln National FS's booth and exhibit at the Archaeological Fair.*

At the 2024 “Bosque Days” multiagency educational field trip for 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Socorro, Magdalena, and Truth or Consequences, RPFO and SFO archaeologists presented educational presentations regarding the importance of cultural resource preservation on public lands. At a similar event at Valley of Fires, RFO archaeologists spoke with middle school students in Lincoln, NM about the cultural resources in southeast New Mexico.

RFO archaeologists also represented the BLM at the 2024 Dragonfly Festival and the Fort Stanton Live Event where they spoke with members of the public about the mission of the BLM, how the BLM serves the public and protects resources on public lands, and the many job opportunities available with the BLM.

BLM NM also was very active at career days and job fairs in FY2024. RFO archaeologists represented the U.S. Bureau of Land Management at five Career Day events in Roswell, two hosted by the New Mexico Military Institute, one hosted by Eastern New Mexico University, one by Roswell High School, and one by Sierra Middle School. RFO archaeologists spoke with middle school, high school and undergraduate university students about the many job opportunities available with the BLM. Archaeologists from the New Mexico State Office, Rio Puerco Field Office and Socorro Field Office represented BLM at the University of New Mexico’s Anthropology Job Fair, which predominantly focused on Anthropology, but attracted students from many academic fields including Anthropology, Archaeology, GIS, Geology, Biology, and Environmental Science.



*Figure 4: Sean Daugherty and Stephanie Jefferies interact with NPS staff*

In FY 2024, the Las Cruces District Office celebrated the 15-year anniversary of the establishment of Prehistoric Trackways National Monument (PTNM) and the 10-year anniversary of the creation of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDPNM). For PTNM, a public birthday bash was held at the Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science, where many of the Monument's important Permian Era fossils are curated. At the celebration, visitors learned about life before the dinosaurs, identified trace fossils, made their own prehistoric tracks, and snacked on paleontological themed cookies. Over 370 people joined the BLM, Las Cruces Museum, and the Friends of OMDP for this celebration.

To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of OMDPNM, BLM monument staff and volunteers, including its Friends Group, planned over 25 outreach and interpretative programs during the month of May, reaching nearly 1,000 members of the public. Events included interpretive guided hikes, presentations on the monument's natural and heritage resources, a ranch tour by a BLM grazing permittee, an Artist-in-Residence workshop, and sunset mountain bike rides in the Doña Anas. Monuments archaeologist Garrett Leitermann led a guided hike to the prehistoric rock shelters at Peña Blanca, hosted an ethnobotany workshop on the many cultural uses of different plants in the Chihuahuan Desert, and gave a virtual presentation over Zoom on the history of



Dripping Springs Hotel and Resort. Monuments Paleontologist Colin Dunn hosted a fossil show-and-tell at Dripping Springs Visitor Center. BLM volunteers and partners offered public guided hikes related to Civil War history, the Butterfield National Historic Trail, historic mining in the Organ Mountains, and Dripping Springs.



*Figure 5: A child makes prints on a canvas bag during the PTNM birthday party at Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science.*

#### *Updates to Carlsbad Field Office Archaeological Field and Reporting Standards*

The BLM-CFO averages more than 700 surveys conducted by more than 20 different third-party archaeological firms annually. With such a large workload of reviewing these third-party inventories, the CFO in 2012 created a set of field and reporting standards that were specific to the CFO region. These standards filled in the gaps left by the current NM H-8100-1 manual supplement for field and reporting standards. The CFO spent more than half of FY24 creating the 20-page field and reporting standards and conducted 15 contractor meetings on the revised standards. The goal of these meetings was to consider the abundant CRM experience available from the many archaeological firms that wanted to participate to improve the quality of reporting while maintaining efficiency. The meetings were very beneficial in creating the new CFO standards and every meeting ended with changes or additions to the standards. With so much oil and gas development happening within the CFO and all the disturbance associated with it, it is vital that those surveying for cultural resources have a full understanding of what the goal of their fieldwork is and how it should be reported. These standards are not only for third-party consultants but were also written in mind for any Section 110 proactive surveys or in-house Section 106 surveys that the CFO will conduct. The use of these standards and terminology will open up more research opportunities and allow for broader synthesis.

#### *Big Bead Mesa Field Visit and Petroglyph Recordation*

On May 8, 2024, archaeologists and staff from the Rio Puerco Field Office, New Mexico State Office, USFS employees, and rock art recording crew volunteers visited Big Bead Mesa (Yoo'tsoh), a National Historic Landmark Navajo Defensive site dating from the 1700s. Along with monitoring the site, the volunteer rock art crew conducted intensive documentation of

petroglyphs at the site. During this visit, some natural collapse features were identified near the iconic, stabilized defensive wall that guards the entrance to the site.



*Figure 6: Natural collapse features were noted during monitoring near the defensive wall of Big Bead Mesa NHL*



*Chacoan Site Recording, Farmington Field Office*

A substantial Chacoan site was reported to the BLM-FFO by a group of paleontological surveyors. The site sits on the slopes and top of a small mesita with a large viewshed and dates to the Pueblo II period (AD 900-1100) as part of the larger Chacoan system that flourished in the San Juan basin. It consists of several structures with the most prominent being a standing masonry structure. It appears to have acted to control access to the low walled structures on the mesita top. This structure is in a precarious situation and is in danger of collapse from erosion. Intensive recording and management actions are being considered given the precarious position of the site and the difficulty in reaching it.



*Figure 7: Masonry structure under threat from erosion*



### *Cerro Montoso Misplotted Site Rectification Project, Taos Field Office*

This ongoing project focuses on the *Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, Class III Cultural Resources Survey of the Cerro Montoso Project Area, Taos County, New Mexico* recorded site locations (NMCRIS activity number: 117233). During site monitoring activities subsequent to the completion of the report, it was discovered that many of the sites had been misplotted during recordation. Many, but not all, of the misplotted sites have been determined to stem from confusion relating to NAD 27/83 issues. The current project is attempting to rectify the issue through ground truthing. Two hundred sixty-seven sites were recorded within the Montoso Project area. Seventy-three have been ground-truthed with 31 determined to be misplotted (42%). This project is expected to last at least 3 more field seasons.



*Figure 8: View of the Cerro Montoso project area*

## **Paleontology**

### *Photogrammetry Methods Training, Las Cruces District Office*

Two of the BLM's Photogrammetry experts, Regional Paleontologist Brent Breithaupt based in the Wyoming State Office and Mark Gapinski out of the National Operations Center in the Geospatial Services section, came down to the Las Cruces District to give training to the Heritage resources team. The training focused on documentation of fossil tracks and traces found in and around Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, however the underlying methods can be used to document cultural resources such as petroglyph panels.



*Figure 9: Brent Breithaupt (left) describes photogrammetric techniques to the training group at the Discovery Site at PTNM*

## **Museum Collections Management**

*Paleontology Collections Manager, University of Arizona Desert Laboratory on Tumamoc Hill*

The BLM New Mexico State Office entered into a three-year Assistance Agreement with the Arizona Board of Regents, University of Arizona to hire a temporary full-time curator to identify paleontological resources that were collected from BLM lands from the 1960's- 1990's. FY 2024 started the third year of this project. These collections were curated in the University of Arizona Laboratory of Paleontology (UALP), however, the collection is poorly curated with little documentation as to which fossils were collected from BLM lands. The curator at the UALP along with the BLM New Mexico Regional Paleontologist have been reviewing old locality maps and other records that were preserved with the museum collections to determine which localities came from BLM lands and creating a locality database in GIS to assist the BLM in land management decisions. The curator is also conducting a complete inventory of the UALP collections to tie individual specimens to locality numbers.

*National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) Interns provide crucial support for BLM NM collections and NAGPRA compliance*

BLM NM placed three NCPE interns this fiscal year. One worked at the Museum of New Mexico Center for New Mexico Archaeology (CNMA), one at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico (MMA), and the third worked at the New Mexico State Office. The two working at repositories updated existing but very dated inventory information regarding BLM NM collections including those with known NAGPRA associations. They coordinated with the NMSO NCPE intern to provide accurate information that was mailed to potentially culturally affiliated Tribes regarding all known NAGPRA ancestors and cultural items. A major effort was made between NMSO and CNMA to provide best available information from existing records regarding ancestors and funerary objects removed from public



lands after 1990 that had not yet been dispositioned. The NMSO intern also assisted with tracking the status of NAGPRA cases, worked hard to enter data into the NM version of the NAGPRA tracking system created by UT BLM, and created a tracking system for museum statements received pursuant to 43 CFR 10.8. She also drafted response letters to museums and communicated with repositories to determine the accuracy of old inventory data published in Notices of Inventory Completion in the past. Although only one ancestor and 13 funerary objects have been repatriated in FY24, the work the three NCPE interns has situated BLM NM in a much better position to repatriate and disposition many more ancestors and cultural items in FY2025.

Please see the Tribal section below for additional information. Much of the archaeological collections work conducted this fiscal year was directly related to NAGPRA.

### **Cultural Resources Data Sharing Partnership/NCRIMS**

BLM New Mexico awarded a contract to the Archaeological Records Management System division of the NM State Historic Preservation Division that provides BLM NM access to Cultural resources data from all jurisdictions in New Mexico, provides BLM with unlimited ability to register sites and surveys in the NM Cultural Resources Information Management System, and secures quarterly data exports following the NMCRIS schema.

BLM NMSO GIS professionals have been working with ARMS to modify the ELT tool developed by BLM's national contractor so that it works with the incredibly complex NMCRIS database exports.

### **Tribal partnerships or consultations pertinent to the Cultural Heritage, Museum Collections, and/or NAGPRA Programs**

Additional detail is available in the 2024 Tribal Relations Program Highlights, but the narrative included here emphasizes the relationship between the Cultural program and the Tribal relations program. The NM State Office plays a supporting role in these important agreements and attends the co-stewardship meetings.

#### *MOU Regarding Co-Stewardship and Protection of Pueblo Cultural Resources in Pueblo Indigenous Territory and Site Visits (with Ohkay Owingeh and USFS)*

This co-stewardship agreement focuses on several important ancestral Ohkay Owingeh sites that are on lands managed by Taos BLM. One site in particular sees heavy visitation and one of the priorities for the Pueblo and BLM Taos is to develop culturally appropriate signage and to address the problem of "collector piles" created by unwitting visitors picking up artifacts and concentrating them into piles. Additional priorities for co-stewardship of these important sites are being worked out by the Pueblo, BLM Taos and the Santa Fe National Forest.

Additional co-stewardship agreements with the Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Jemez, and the Pueblo of Acoma are in negotiation and are anticipated to be signed early in Fiscal Year 2025.

### *Farmington Field Office Tribal Consultation Sharepoint Pilot Project*

As a result of consultation with a multiple Tribes and Pueblos regarding a variety of project types, FFO began to identify common concerns. These include an overwhelming quantity of consultation letters, the availability of project documents, and quality and information depicted on project maps. In an effort to alleviate some of these concerns and to make consultation more meaningful and efficient, for both the tribes and the agency, FFO has coordinated with some of our most active consulting parties in developing a SharePoint site. This SharePoint provides an interactive map with multiple layers available for the consulting party to view depending on their needs. If the user chooses to look further into a project they can navigate directly from the interactive map to the linked documents folder on the SharePoint site. This provides a benefit to the consulting party as they have multiple sources of information to help them decide if they would like to further consult on the project. Not all information can be made so readily available (i.e. cultural resources inventory reports) and the consulting party can then request those documents from the provided contact person. This is still a work in progress but initial steps show much promise and has already generated interest with consulting parties who have provided FFO with important and actionable feedback.

### *Repatriation and Reburial of Ancestors from the University Museum*

As reported in FY23, the BLM Las Cruces District Office worked with New Mexico State University (NMSU) to repatriate NAGPRA collections under BLM's control at the University Museum to the Mescalero Apache Tribe as the repatriation lead consented to by the other culturally affiliated Tribes and Pueblos. Early in FY2024, the BLM, NMSU, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and Pueblo of Zuni came together in an all-day ceremony to reinter the repatriated ancestors and their belongings off public lands. The interment was a significant and symbolic endeavor as the involved ancestors were then treated, not as objects of curiosity or study to be left in the confines of a museum, but as people who deserved to be returned to the earth with due dignity and respect.

### *Repatriation and Reburial of Navajo Ancestor*

The New Mexico State Office and the Farmington Field Office repatriated an ancestor and funerary objects to the Navajo Nation decades after publication of the Notice of Inventory Completion. This was made possible by the assistance of the NMSO's National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) intern, who summarized and organized decades old NAGPRA and museum records for this and 70 additional NAGPRA cases.



# **Annual 2024 BLM-New Mexico Report to SHPO October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024**

## **I. List of Adverse Effect Undertakings Resolved using the Streamlined Process (Section VIII.B)(Include steps/methods used to resolve the issue)**

None reported from any BLM NM office

## **II. List of Agreement Documents Executed during the Fiscal Year**

1. Taos Field Office executed “Memorandum Of Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, Bureau of Land Management, and New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer, Regarding The Treatment of Historic Properties for the Wild Rivers Back Country Byway Entrance Road Project Taos County, New Mexico” Signed April, 2024.

## **III. Post-Review Discoveries**

1. Farmington Field office reported that the AB Crossover Pipeline discovery was made on September 24, 2024. Bob Estes was notified on September 25, 2024. It consists of a hearth feature exposed in a pipeline trench with no associated artifacts and its not in immediate proximity to any previously recorded sites. The feature has been protected and avoided until appropriate mitigations can occur. We are still in the early stages of consulting on this discovery.

## **IV. Discussion of BLM and SHPO NRHP eligibility evaluations and effect determinations, and recommendations to improve consensus, if necessary;**

Generally, the working relationship between offices and their SHPO reviewer is very positive with several offices complimenting reviewers for their communicativeness and the focus on reasonable recommendations (CFO, FFO). One office offers a suggestion to improve the efficiency and process in which BLM and SHPO resolve disagreements related to site eligibility. The closing out of an HPD log prior to discussion and resolution of the dispute with BLM creates unnecessary and drawn-out consultation timelines by having to reconsult under a new HPD log and the reopening of online NMCRIS activities. Therefore, it is recommended that the SHPO does not close out or finalize a HPD log until the BLM has an opportunity to respond and discuss with SHPO a resolution to the disagreement in site eligibility.

## **V. Suggestions Concerning Additional Training Needed for BLM Staff to Fulfill their Responsibilities Under this Protocol**

1. A scenario based training might be appropriate as many of the newer staff may not have had the chance to go through all the steps of a challenging project.
2. NMCRIS training

## **VI. Recommendations for any Amendments to Improve the Effectiveness of the Protocol Including the Addition or Revision of Appendices**

1. A standard data recovery treatment plan for regularly occurring feature types (thermal features, storage pits, etc) would be useful. It could reduce the time involved in developing such a plan and having to consult on it.
2. Consideration from SHPO to allow batching of reports that are No Historic Properties Affected if they include historic properties that are also eligible under other criteria other than D. Currently, BLM can only batch reports that are no historic properties affected if all of the historic properties are only eligible under D. Or perhaps a discussion with BLM/NMSHPO at our annual meeting in person to discuss why this is a contingency in the protocol for BLM.
3. Perhaps more standard APE's for typical BLM projects not listed in Appendix B.

## **VII. List of Backlogged Reports Completed and Number of Reports Remaining in Backlog**

- CFO, FFO, RFO, and TFO report no backlogged reports
- LCDO, RPFO and SFO report that they are not aware of backlogged reports