



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

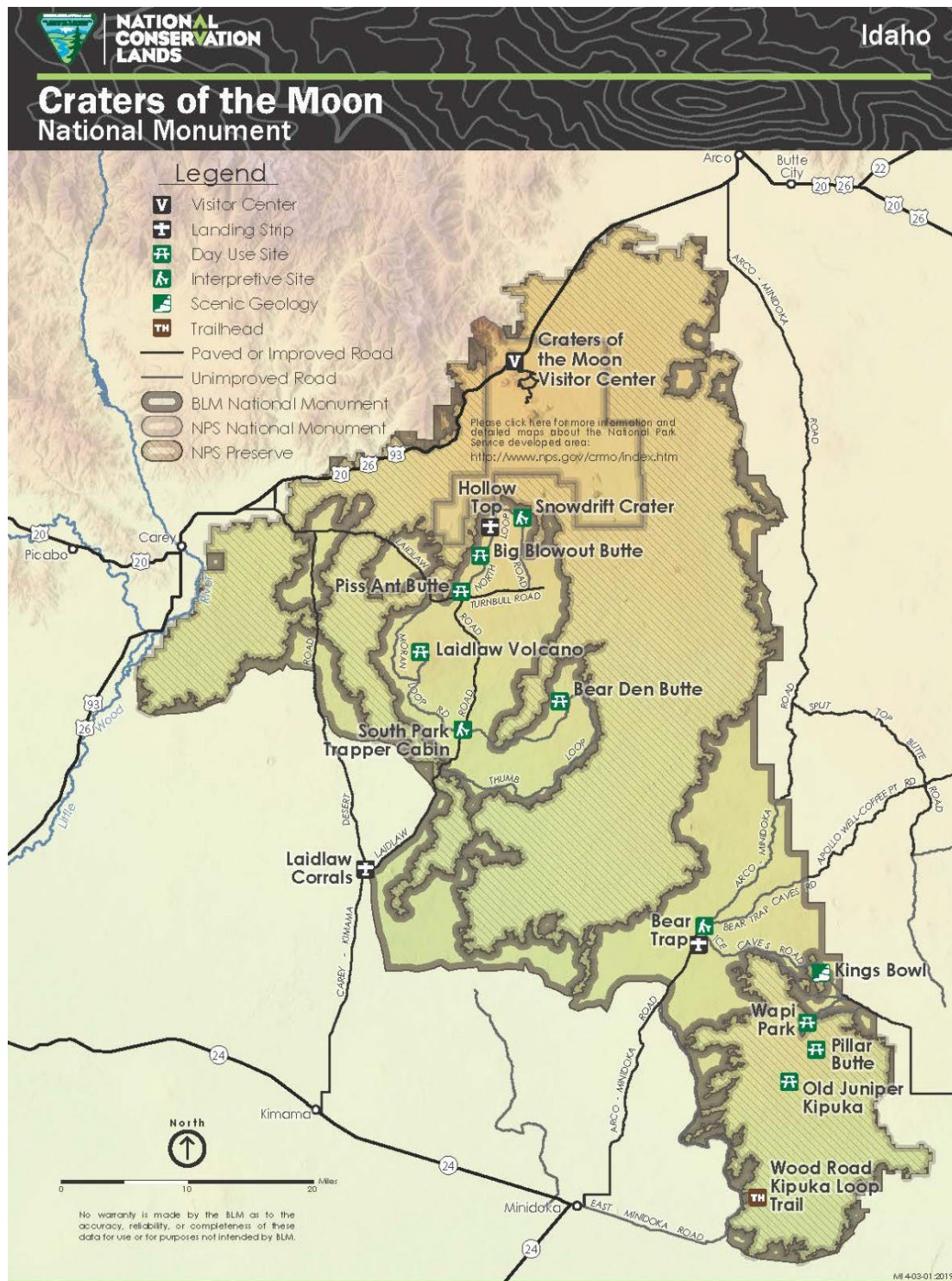
Idaho
2024: Annual Manager's Report

Craters of the Moon

National Monument and Preserve



Map



Accomplishments

A lack of wildfires in 2024 again gave the Monument a much-needed reprieve. Many miles of road have been improved over the last few years to create fire breaks and improve fire suppression access.

In September 2024, the Twin Falls District Fuels Program conducted an aerial herbicide treatment over nearly 6,000 acres in Craters of the Moon National Monument. This treatment is the first phase in the long-term Laidlaw Restoration Project that includes multiple herbicide treatments and seedings. These restoration efforts are follow-up treatments to the 2012 Flat Top 2 fire that burned nearly 135,000 acres of public land.

The Burley Field Office completed the draft Minidoka Allotment Rangeland Health Assessment (RHA) in the fall of 2024. The allotment is over 95,000 acres and more than half of the allotment is located on the monument. Monitoring data indicate that the allotment is largely meeting standards of rangeland health or making significant progress towards meeting standards. The allotment was burned by many large fires in the late 1990s and early 2000s which removed much of the sagebrush cover in the area. Large restoration and re-seeding efforts have notably increased sagebrush cover, which provides suitable habitat for sage grouse and other sagebrush obligate species in the area.

Last year, important post fire work included chemical spot treatments on the Peavey fire rehab site to control scotch thistle, diffuse knapweed and rush skeleton (458 acres). Additionally, 150,000 acres were flown by helicopter, within and adjacent to the Monument to map, inventory and spot-treat leafy spurge.

Recreation and cultural resources staff continue major graffiti cleanup efforts at Bear Trap Cave in the southern portion of the Monument. A [short educational video](#) was produced for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) social media and a new interpretive sign was installed near Bear Trap Cave.



Challenges

Staff's diligent efforts to remove graffiti was eased a bit by using an effective product called "Elephant Snot" created for paint removal from the rocks and other rough materials. Their clean-up efforts began in 2023 and continued in 2024 at Bear Trap Cave where they removed graffiti that had been painted over several large areas of wall. While significant progress was made, additional graffiti removal will be needed to complete the job in fiscal year (FY) 25.



Visitors

The rugged, more remote BLM managed portion of Craters of the Moon NM sees relatively few visitors. Due to the undeveloped nature of the interior of the Monument, visitors to the BLM backcountry consist mainly of grazing permittees, Idaho Department of Fish and Game Conservation Officers and BLM staff. In contrast, more than 200,000 people visit the National Park Service (NPS) portion of the Monument, conveniently located on U.S. Highway 20, every year.

Four new location or directional signs were installed in the BLM backcountry in FY 24. These signs complete with helpful QR codes containing directional guidance, have reduced the number of visitor mistakenly entering the backcountry, which has improved the overall visitor safety and experience. A new interpretive panel sign was designed and installed for Bear Trap Cave.



Partnerships

In 2024, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) applications for the Huddles Hole and Snowdrift properties were accepted at the national level and we were given the go ahead to proceed with the acquisition of these parcels. BLM is partnering with The Nature Conservancy and private landowners to acquire 2,145 acres. The BLM realty staff hopes to close on these properties by the fall of 2025.

Additionally, the BLM partnered with the Silver Sage Grotto, a cave conservation group based in Twin Falls, Idaho, to complete cave monitoring. In 2024, the Silver Sage Grotto monitored four caves located within Craters of the Moon National Monument.



Science

BLM biologists assisted National Park Service (NPS) biologists with a hibernacula survey within Arco Tunnel in early March of 2024. Hibernacula surveys occur annually within Arco Tunnel to assess bat populations and monitor for white nose syndrome. Within hibernacula, bats enter a state of winter torpor during which they are far less active and often found hanging from the walls, ceilings, or crevices of cave structures. Therefore, biologists can take advantage of these times to visually assess changes in bat population structures over time. However, they must also exercise extreme caution to avoid excessive disturbance to hibernating bats. Hibernacula disturbance may include bat mortality and decrease their body mass. To minimize disturbance, biologists carefully photographed bats they encountered in the cave and reviewed these images after the survey to determine the number of bats and approximate number of species. They photographed 81 bats during the survey. Species observed include long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), and other *Myotis* species. As bats are not directly handled during these surveys, exact species level determinations are not always possible. However, these surveys still allow for assessment of populations and monitoring for symptoms of white nose syndrome. Fortunately, they did not observe any evidence of white nose syndrome.



Outreach and Special Events

Shoshone Field Office Archaeologist Daryl Ferguson and Craters of the Moon National Monument Outdoor Recreation Planner David Freiberg participated in the Gooding Little City of Rocks field day for fifth graders on Thursday, September 24. Hosted by the Gooding Soil Conservation District, the annual event brings in over 200 fifth graders and 30 adults from Camas County, Gooding Schools, Wendell Schools and Bliss Schools. Five learning stations include geology/volcanology, cultural resources, water resources, paleontology and wildlife. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Gooding County Soil Conservation District, and the NPS team up to staff these stations for the annual field trip near one of the Shoshone Field Office's more popular Wilderness Study Areas. According to Freiberg, "This is a great opportunity to reach a huge number of area fifth graders on an annual basis. Bringing this many agencies together to teach about resources on public lands raises the interest and awareness these kids have about their local resources."



Words from the Staff

As we begin the new year, it's hard to believe Craters of the Moon National Monument is entering its 25th year as a jointly managed NPS/BLM National Monument. Much has changed since then and much has stayed the same. Staff have come and gone and, our commitment to the management of the Monument has remained. It continues to be a vast, undeveloped refuge in the heart of southcentral Idaho, home to sage-grouse, pronghorn, and elk. I am moving on to another role in the Bureau as the Shoshone Field Office Manager and the Monument Manager position is currently vacant. I will always treasure my time as Monument Manager, and I hope we are able to fill the position again soon. Until then, I will continue to oversee Craters as the Field Manager. May the next 25 years be as good as the last!

Lisa Cresswell, Shoshone Field Manager





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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mypubliclands/albums/72157633600345803/>

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