



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Utah

2024: Annual Manager's Report

Bears Ears

National Monument



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Bears Ears National Monument
Recreation Opportunities

This map is geo-referenced and is intended for mobile and online viewing only.

BLM Monument Field Office
965 North Main | 278-250-2100
Farmington, New Mexico 87401
801 South Main Street | 278-250-2001

NORTH

Roads
Interstate
Highway
County Road
Mojave Road
Indian Road
Native Trail

Historic Trail
Mojave Road
Indian Road
Native Trail

Land Status
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
BLM Wilderness/Start
State
Forest Service (FS)
Forest Service Wilderness Area
Private
National Park Service
Indian Reservation
Bears Ears National Monument Boundary

Visitor Information
Ranger Station
Hiking Trail
Overlook/Scenic View
Historic Site
Trailhead
Overlook/Scenic View
Group Campsites
Point of Interest
Recreation
Sightseeing
Hike Center
Hospital
Store
Gas Station
Post Office
Fuel Station

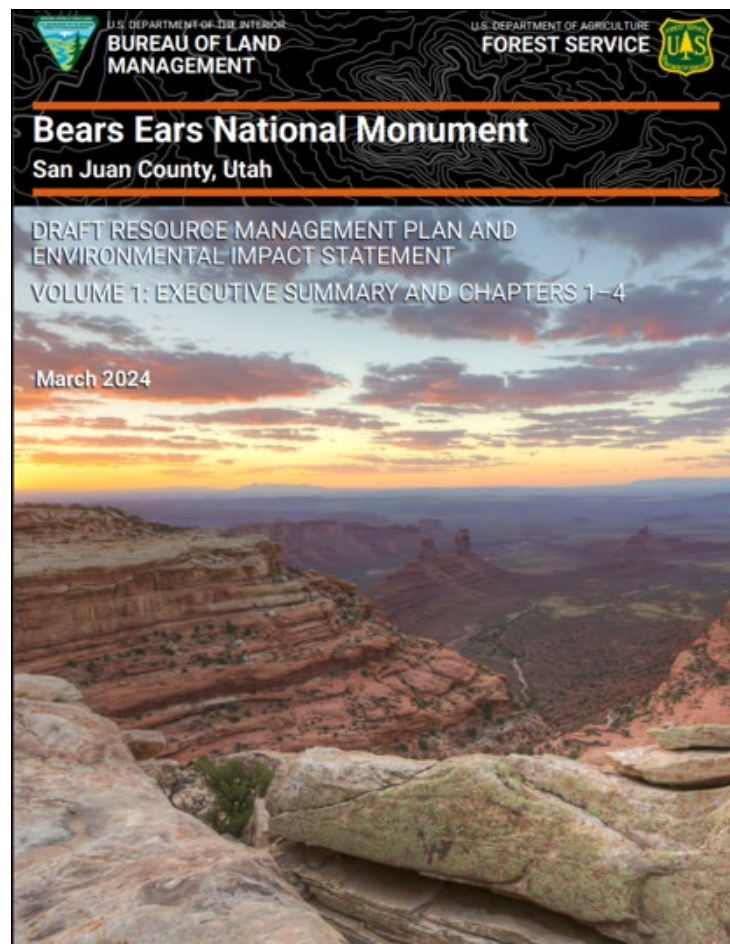
What you can do to protect ancient and sacred places
VIEW WITH RESPECT: When you visit, please stay on the designated trail. Do not touch or move any rocks, plants, or animals. Do not leave any trash or litter. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.
LEAVE ALL ANIMALS ALONE: Do not feed or touch any animals. Do not get too close to any animals. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.
AVOID BURNING: Do not burn any trash or litter. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.
KEEP A CLEAN TRAIL: Do not leave any trash or litter. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.
DO NOT FEED ANIMALS: Do not feed any animals. Do not get too close to any animals. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.

Visit with Respect
When you visit, please stay on the designated trail. Do not touch or move any rocks, plants, or animals. Do not leave any trash or litter. Do not use any vehicles or off-road vehicles on the trail.

Other Map Resources
BLM Monument Field Office
BLM Monument Field Office
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Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2024 was a busy year for Bears Ears National Monument (BENM). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA FS), Bears Ears Commission (BEC), and cooperating agencies worked on an Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to determine how to manage BENM in the future. The Draft RMP/EIS was released to the public in early March, beginning the 90-day public comment period. The BENM team worked with our partners in the last quarter of the fiscal year to develop the Proposed BENM RMP. The Final RMP/EIS is planned to be approved and released in January 2025.



Cover of the Bears Ears National Monument Draft RMP/EIS.

Challenges

Visitors and their inexperience visiting cultural sites continues to be a challenge in BENM. Our staff is partnering with multiple organizations from the Utah Division of State History, Bears Ears Partnership, and Tribal Nations to better educate visitors on fragile cultural resource visitation. BENM is also experiencing increases in woodcutting across the southern portion of BENM. This is due in part to regional economic changes and the greater reliance of local communities on fuelwood for cooking and heating private homes. We are looking at options to augment Tribal member's ability to collect fuelwood while protecting BENM objects. Last fiscal year, the BLM and USDA FS had some discussions with BEC about potential options for helping tribal members collect fuelwood. The State of Utah has initiated a new program they are calling "Wood for Life", with the intent of improving cooperation of agencies, the public, and Tribal Nations to help provide fuelwood for community members. This program has picked up steam during fiscal year 2024 and there are currently various wood banks across the region to help support local communities, including those communities whose Tribal Nations make up the BEC. Some of this work was featured in a BLM daily, [Kindling connections with fire fuels](#), and associated social media. The BLM is working with partners to consider additional wood banks to support local communities and the BLM Desert Rivers Fire Management Division has made it a priority to work on supporting these wood banks as a part of our fuels work in BENM and Canyon Country District. The Canyon Country Fuels Team is contemplating some work to help limit potential catastrophic fire in Cedar Mesa to protect BENM objects and deliver fuelwood to local communities.

Visitors

In 2024, we recorded an estimated 416,119 individual visits in BENM. This is less than the 2023 estimate of 454,061 visits. Indian Creek remains the most visited area of the office as it contains popular locations like Newspaper Rock and Donnelly Canyon, though visitors generally spend less time there during their visits than visitors to other areas.

To help better educate visitors about the importance of BENM and its landscapes to descendant communities and Tribal Nations, we have entered into an assistance agreement with CyArk to work with the BEC and Tribal Nations to create three dimensional online guided tours of the River House site, the Butler Wash Interpretive site, and the Monarch Cave site. This year, the Pueblo of Acoma provided input and did narrative work at Monarch Cave. In previous years, BLM had the Pueblo of Zuni out to the River House site and had the Hopi Tribe out at the Butler Wash Interpretive Site with CyArk to assist in future interpretation at these sites. This assistance agreement is nearing completion, and we are hoping to release the new tours with CyArk, Hopi, Zuni, and Acoma this next fiscal year. In 2021, CyArk and BENM released online tours for the popular House on Fire and Mule Canyon Village sites, which can be found at <https://www.cyark.org/projects/bears-ears/Guided-Tours>.



Hopi Cultural Resource Advisory Task Team at Butler Interpretive Site.

Partnerships

BENM partners with many local and national organizations to enhance visitor experience and protect resources. A longstanding partnership with the Bears Ears Partnership (BEP) has resulted in a variety of benefits, including hosted Site Ambassadors to provide visitor information at heavily visited cultural sites, a volunteer project during the Celebrate Cedar Mesa event, and printed materials such as maps and site etiquette signs at trailheads. We entered into new assistance agreements with BEP to support our ongoing partnership to involve Tribal Nations in our work, conserve BENM objects, and provide education to visitors. We also have partnerships with Access Fund and CyArk.

BENM leadership also initiated assistance agreements with the five Tribal Nations of the BEC in 2022 and 2023. These agreements will help the BEC to cooperate with BENM on a variety of projects such as tribal youth education, gathering information from tribal communities, and supporting the BEC Tribes in our management of BENM. Last year most of this coordination time was spent on planning for the BENM RMP.

Science

In the last year, several researchers have reached out for permits and conducted research in BENM. Utah State University has continued its research on Raramuri Criollo cattle, testing their impacts on plants and soil and how well they respond to heat stress in comparison to Red Angus cattle. A collaboration between USGS, Brigham & Women's College and Dine College did a weeklong trip on the San Juan River to connect indigenous public health students with ecological field methods (recording bat activity, seining for fish, and water quality metrics). Utah Valley University conducted a vegetation study in Grand Gulch to document the flora in this area by collecting specimens for a herbarium and genetic work.

BENM staff and staff from the Navajo Nation had initial discussions about conducting dendrochronological studies at a number of ethnohistoric sites on the BENM. We are currently considering issuing a permit to the University of Arizona and Boston University in coordination with the Navajo Nation to collect dendrochronology samples in the next fiscal year. This project will help the BLM and Navajo Nation better understand occupation of historic Navajo peoples in the region.

BENM staff continued our ethnographic study in 2024. Last year we conducted ethnographic interviews with the Pueblo of Zia to better understand the importance of the monument and to the pueblos. We also coordinated an initial visit with the Navajo Nation to scout locations and coordinate a future ethnographic visit to document and share the importance of this landscape to the Navajo Nation.

Staff also worked with the BEC and their subcommittee members to include Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) in the development of the BENM RMP/EIS. A few examples of the inclusion of TIK include seasonality incorporated into the alternatives, a Cross Cultural Education section, a broader interpretation of cultural resources, and vegetation and water management.

Events

In fiscal year 2024, the we conducted seven public meetings both in-person and virtually to engage the public and receive input on the draft BENM RMP. The in-person meetings were held in Blanding, Salt Lake City, Monument Valley, Twin Arrows, AZ and Albuquerque, NM. The BENM held two virtual meetings in April and May. The virtual meetings were the best attended and the public meetings in Salt Lake City and Blanding had the highest turnouts for the in-person meetings. The USDA FS and the BLM received 18,217 comments during the comment period and 1,543 of those comments were substantive.



USDA FS Tribal Liaison and BEC Subcommittee member answering questions at a public meeting for the Draft BENM RMP.



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Bears Ears National Monument

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