



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Colorado
2023: Annual Manager's Report

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument



McElmo Black-on-white (AD 1075-1225) ceramic vessels in CANM collections.

Accomplishments

New Visitor Center Exhibits. Through a multi-year process, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) staff worked with a contractor, tribes, and partners to develop new exhibits for the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum (Center). For the first time, visitors entering the Center can discover, through self-guided exploration, why the Monument and Center exist, as well as the educational and recreational opportunities available to them throughout CANM. Messages focused on visiting cultural sites with respect and the importance of the sites to modern indigenous people are infused throughout the exhibits.

Englehart Special Exhibit. The exhibit “My Calendar” by beloved Four Corners artist Stanton Englehart opened in September 2023 and will remain in the Center’s special exhibit space through the end of 2024. Englehart founded the art department at Fort Lewis College in 1961 and was a professor there for more than 30 years. His inspiration was found in the open wild hills, mesas, and canyons of the mountains and deserts of southwestern Colorado and Utah.

Painted Hand Pueblo. Painted Hand Pueblo is one of 13 public cultural sites on the Monument. Prior to 2023, access to the site involved traversing a rough road that crossed private land. In 2023, the road was rerouted to public lands and improved. In addition, a new parking area, picnic shelter, restroom, and trail were constructed. The final phase of the project will be completed in 2024 with the addition of interpretive signs developed in partnership with Maryland Institute, College of Art.

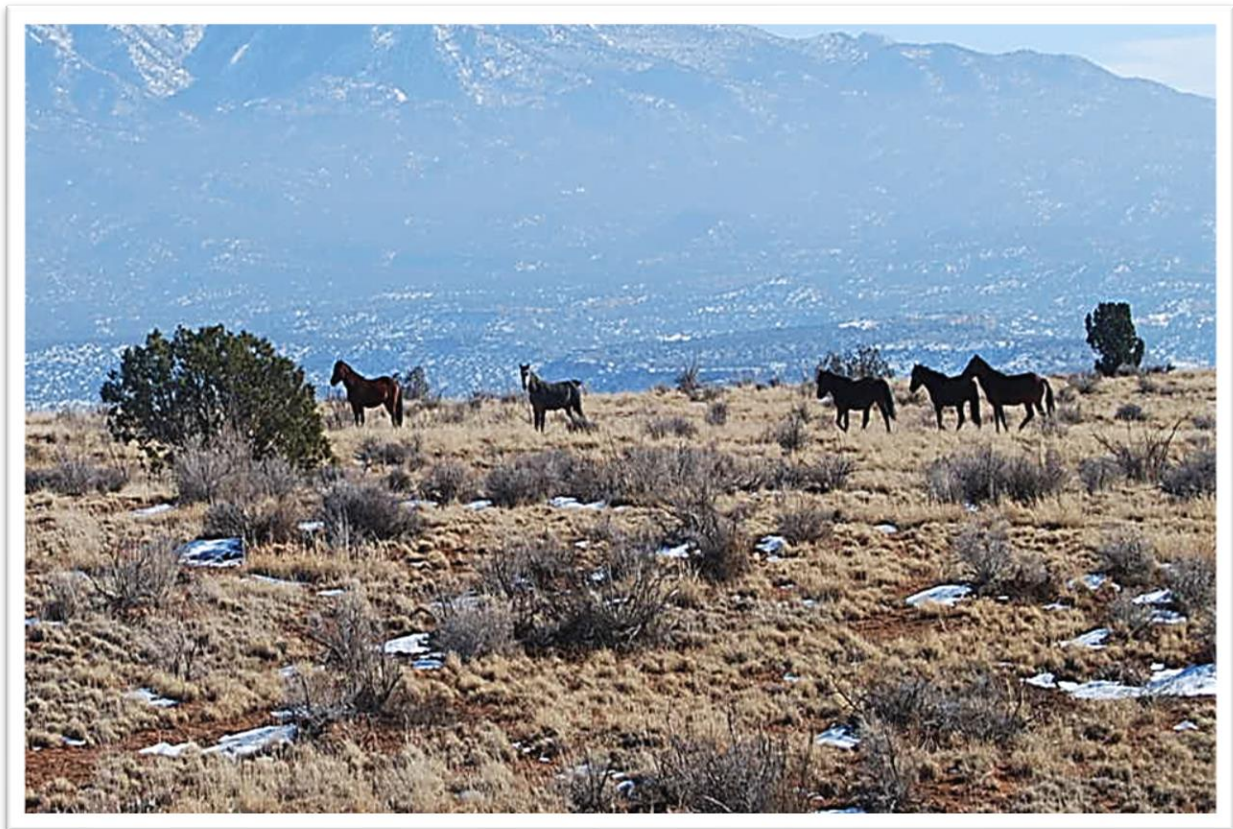


Spires by Stanton Englehart

Challenges

Trespass Livestock. CANM and Tres Rios Field Office staff conducted surveys of trespass horses on Monument lands by foot and vehicle, counting 123 animals in fall 2022 and 150 in fall 2023. Due to limitations in the survey technique, staff estimate that the total number of horses is likely higher, at around 200 horses. While issues with trespass horses have been documented on the Monument for decades, the current population may be historically high.

CANM staff have expressed concerns about degradation to cultural resources, as well as human safety and impacts to wildlife and riparian resources. Over the past year, staff have worked with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the state of Colorado Wild Horse Working Group, and others to explore potential solutions to the growing problem.



Trespass horse herd in the Cannonball Mesa area of the Monument.

Visitors

Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum welcomed 13,338 visitors in FY23, a 50% decrease from FY22.

A major floor renovation required closing the Center during a large portion of our busiest season from March through July. The floor slab was cracking and settling and had the potential to become unsafe. Contractors drilled over 100 holes through the slab and installed jacks to stabilize the floor. We appreciated the good work of the contractor and BLM's engineering staff in ensuring the facility's future with a stabilized floor. We also appreciated the understanding and flexibility of our partner and bookstore operator, the Glen Canyon Conservancy, as the schedule for this major project constantly shifted.

- Number of visitors to CANM in FY23: 98,265
 - Sand Canyon Trail System: 14,127
 - Sand Canyon Pueblo: 13,121
 - Lowry Pueblo: 18,760
 - Painted Hand: 6,471
 - Dispersed: 47,473
- K-12 Curriculum-based education programs: 130 programs reaching 3,037 youth and 223 adults
- Museum Events: 52 events reaching 2,249 participants
- Curation Tours: 22 tours reaching 150 visitors
- Hosted Researchers at CANM Curation Program: 10



A new road, parking lot, picnic shelter, restroom, and interpretive trail were constructed at the Painted Hand Pueblo public site in 2023.

Partnerships

In FY 23, CANM staff proudly worked alongside and through 11 partner organizations to increase our capacity and extend our reach in accomplishing Monument goals.

Ancestral Lands Conservation Corp

The Monument and the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corp entered into the fourth year of an assistance agreement to employ Native American youth historic preservation specialists within CANM. Over a dozen members of descendent communities have participated as fully trained and experienced site preservation technicians, well-versed in the methods and techniques necessary for the successful stabilization and preservation of Prehistoric Puebloan masonry habitations.

Crow Canyon Archaeological Center (CCAC)

CCAC and CANM deliver Outdoor Museum on the Ground (OMOG) cultural programming to fourth graders in Montezuma and Dolores county schools, reaching close to 400 youth every year. In addition, CCAC provides cultural education and training to BLM staff and partners each year to help enhance our understanding and knowledge of the area.

CyArk

The Monument is collaborating with the non-profit CyArk to deepen appreciation and understanding of Painted Hand Pueblo by developing a virtual experience for display at the Canyons of the Ancients Museum. The initial project will involve building software using CyArk's Tapestry platform to provide an immersive experience that enables both on-site and remote visitors to explore the site while learning about its cultural and spiritual significance through personal narratives.

Glen Canyon Conservancy (GCC)

Based out of Page, Arizona, the Glen Canyon Conservancy operates bookstores at 11 National Park Service and BLM locations. GCC began operating the bookstore at Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center in 2022.

Jagiellonian University

CANM, CCAC, and the Institute of Archaeology at Jagiellonian University have partnered on a project to develop an interactive exhibit of the Strawman petroglyph panel for display within the permanent gallery of the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum. Existing digital documentation captured by Jagiellonian University will be combined with oral history interviews to provide visitors with an understanding of both Ute and Euro-American perspectives on the cultural landscape with the Monument.

Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)

Since 2016, the Monument has partnered with MICA on a project to develop methods for the digital and analog documentation of the prehistoric cultural landscape. The project has been a collaboration between the Institute's professional landscape architect, tribal consultants from descendant Native America communities, and students from several different backgrounds and academic departments, including art, graphic design, illustration, and architecture.

Mesa Verde National Park

In the fifth season of an interagency agreement, the BLM has partnered with the Site Conservation Program at Mesa Verde National Park to stabilize prehistoric Puebloan masonry habitations, in concert with the Ancestral Lands Conservation Program.

Monument Cultural Site Stewardship Program (MSSP)

Administered by the BLM and the Southwest Colorado Canyons Alliance, the MSSP utilized 61 volunteers to monitor 117 prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. In its 22nd year, these volunteer site stewards contributed approximately 1,038 hours of time and drove 13,990 miles, for an estimated BLM volunteer value of \$33,047.

San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA)

CANM partners with SJMA to offer curriculum-based education programs to schools in and around Montezuma, Dolores, and La Plata counties. Together, we delivered 141 educational programs and reached 1,365 youth in FY23.



Members of the public participate in a dance circle during the Four Corners Indigenous Art Market.

Southwest Colorado Canyons Alliance (SCCA)

The mission of the non-profit SCCA is to foster awareness and appreciation of the landscape and cultural heritage of the Monument through collaboration with the BLM. SCCA partners with CANM to provide special events, including the first ever Four Corners Indigenous Art Market and the second annual star party, as well as lectures and cultural demonstrations. Their programs increase the public's understanding and relationship with the 26 Associated Tribes and Pueblos connected to the Monument's landscape.

University of Colorado, Denver

For the past 15 years, the BLM has partnered with the College of Architecture and Design at CU Denver on the advancing methods for the documentation of prehistoric architectural sites on the Monument. This partnership has been widely recognized for melding digital and analog methods for the creation of Historic American Building Survey drawings and 3D models.

Science - Jagiellonian University

For the thirteenth year, project director Dr. Radoslaw Palonka sent researchers from Kraków, Poland to CANM to continue their investigation into Ancestral Puebloan lifeways. The project is the first independent Polish archaeological project in the United States and seeks to further our understanding of prehistoric community organization within 13th century Puebloan society. While the project's primary focus is the Sand Canyon-East Rock Creek area of the Monument, the expedition has also ventured a few miles north into the poorly documented Sandstone Canyon. Working with BLM Archaeologist Vince MacMillan, the group conducted archaeological surveys, as well as aerial and terrestrial LiDAR and photogrammetry of several sites within CANM.



Researcher and volunteer Maiya Gralia trains students from Jagiellonian University in rock art documentation techniques at an Ancestral Puebloan archaeological site in CANM.

Social and Environmental Justice – Indigenous Art Market

CANM staff hosted our first Four Corners Indigenous Art Market at Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum in partnership with SCCA. SCCA was able to hold the event on site as a fundraiser and process sales for the artists. We invited tribal members from the 26 Associated Tribes and Pueblos to host art booths, present cultural demonstrations, share cultural dances, and give lectures during which tribal members shared their truths and stories about the history of this landscape with our audience.



Maatuu Dancer, from Hopi Pueblo, at the Monument's first annual Indigenous Art Market.

Events – Star Party

This was the Monument's second year hosting a Star Party at Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum. SCCA partnered with the Society for Cultural Astronomy in the American Southwest (SCAAS) to bring amazing astronomers and tribal members to share their love and knowledge of the night sky with the community. Presentations focused on the constellations and cultural stories, followed by telescope viewing. The program is vital as CANM strives towards achieving International Dark Sky Designation.



Ric Alling from Arizona State University's School of Earth and Space Exploration turning the plaza of the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center into an outdoor planetarium for visitors during our second annual star party.

Staff Topic of Choice – NCPE Internship Program

Since 2012, the CANM Curation Program, the largest within the BLM, has partnered with the National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) to recruit interns for on-the-job training in managing archaeological museum collections and associated project documentation. Interns gain broad exposure to federal curatorial procedures and standards and obtain an understanding of collections management fundamentals. Their duties include cataloging and rehousing artifacts, performing inventories of exhibited and stored objects, assisting staff with researcher access to collections, and implementing integrated pest management (IPM) and housekeeping procedures.

Many NCPE Interns have gone on to pursue careers in museums and archaeology. NCPE 2023 intern Léo Rivera is currently employed as a Curatorial Specialist with California State Parks. Rivera completed 1,200 hours of paid service related to the preservation and management of cultural materials originating from public lands. Léo focused on cataloging material from the Sand Canyon Archaeological District, part of the cultural landscape of CANM.

The NCPE Internship at CANM includes a salary, paid leave, and on-site housing. Upon completing at least 640 hours of service, interns are also eligible for a two-year Public Lands Corps direct hiring authority. In addition to these tangible benefits, the CANM Curation Program provides an inclusive mentorship environment, and opportunities for ethical engagement with living cultural heritage and connected communities. The NCPE Internship has become vital to the continued success of the CANM Curation Program and provides a valuable path to train and support emerging professionals in cultural heritage management.



2023 NCPE Intern Léo Rivera.



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