



Too Much of a Good Thing

Record-setting crowds at parks and public lands across the country made primetime news this spring and summer. For years NPCA has been working with parks in the Southwest on looming visitation challenges, and we continue to examine what’s happening on the ground and collaborate with park staff and communities to ensure park visits are spectacular and resources are preserved.

Rocky Mountain National Park’s pilot timed-entry reservation system exemplifies a proactive strategy for managing big crowds. Beginning in May this year, Rocky Mountain reinstated the system for park entry (debuted in 2020 to mitigate COVID-19 transmission risk) and created a separate system for the Bear Lake Corridor. This dual system helps spread visitors out throughout the day and eases congestion at Bear Lake, a particularly popular area of the park. The Park Service’s adaptive management practices — which monitor, evaluate and continually make adjustments — will improve and refine the system over time.

NPCA believes timed-entry is an important tool in the suite of solutions to address the crippling crowding occurring at Rocky Mountain and other parks. We strongly support long-term visitor use management planning processes throughout the

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Moving Forward

With new opportunities for national parks and public lands comes new work for NPCA. As you can see in this field report, we are busy in the Southwest region, and we are thrilled with all the promise and potential for our region and for the public.

There is so much to celebrate:

- The Greater Chaco Region moving steadily toward permanent protection of that sacred cultural landscape, while also reducing human health impacts for low-income local communities (though we still have a long way to go)
- Proactive, adaptive policies to protect park resources and your visitor experience from unpleasant overcrowding
- A new national historic site in the works to tell a more inclusive story of our country by honoring the living history of survivors and descendants of a Japanese American incarceration camp in Colorado called Amache
- Working with our Tribal friends and allies to protect one of the Southwest’s richest concentrations of ancestral cultural sites in the “Lands Between” (and we are very happy to introduce you to our new consultant assisting us there)

- Promising signs of restoring Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments to their original legal boundaries



These protected places and stories are for everyone — and future generations — to enjoy and learn from. Unfortunately, they also need our constant vigilance to defend them against threats, as NPCA has been doing for over 100 years. Thank you for supporting NPCA as we continue to protect the lands and the collective history we all share. Now back to work!

Top: Petrified Forest National Park ©Larryknupp | Dreamstime **Above:** Cedar Mesa Valley of the Gods, Bears Ears National Monument ©Bob Wick | Bureau of Land Management

OUR MISSION

Protecting and enhancing America’s National Park System for present and future generations.

FIELD REPORT

SUMMER | FALL 2021

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah

Southwest Regional Office Staff

307 West 200 South • Suite 5000
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
801.521.0785

Email Contact:
southwest@npca.org

Ernie Atencio

REGIONAL DIRECTOR, SOUTHWEST
eatencio@npca.org • 505.444.0032

Tracy Coppola

COLORADO SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER
tcoppola@npca.org • 303.947.8013

Kevin Dahl

ARIZONA SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER
kdahl@npca.org • 520.603.6430

Cassidy Jones

SENIOR OUTREACH AND
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, SOUTHWEST
cjones@npca.org • 801.521.0785

Cory MacNulty

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SOUTHWEST
cmacnulty@npca.org • 801.521.0785

Erika Pollard

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SOUTHWEST
epollard@npca.org • 801.521.0785

Emily Wolf

NEW MEXICO PROGRAM AND
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
ewolf@npca.org • 505.423.3550

Headquarters

National Parks Conservation Association
777 6th Street, NW • Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-3723

NPCA Membership Services Team

800.628.7275 • npc@npca.org

Design by
kelleyalbertdesign.com



EST 1919
npc.org

Protecting the Chaco Cultural Landscape

The multi-year fight to protect the greater Chaco landscape and communities from oil and gas development continues. Organizers in Pueblo and Navajo communities are leading the effort and NPCA and our conservation and historic preservation allies are lending support and influence in every way we can.

In December 2020, Congress extended a temporary prohibition of oil and gas leasing on federal lands within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park, allowing more time for completion of a Tribally-led study of cultural connections to archaeological and sacred sites in the area. Additionally, the comprehensive Bureau of Land Management planning process for lands surrounding the park has been extended through 2022, which will give Tribal nations more opportunity for formal consultation with the agency about their concerns and priorities.

In May, Senator Martin Heinrich sent a

letter to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland calling on the Biden administration to cease all federal oil and gas leasing within the 10-mile protection area until a permanent solution can be reached through federal legislation. Meanwhile, NPCA and our allies are working with Senators Heinrich and Luján and Congresswoman Leger Fernández on the re-introduction of the Chaco Culture Heritage Area Protection Act, which would permanently end leasing on federal lands within the 10-mile area (importantly, all Tribal lands are exempt out of respect for Tribal self-determination and economic development opportunities) and provide other protections for the connected landscape and communities. There is much more to do, but this would be a tremendous first step.

With so much in motion for the Greater Chaco Region, stay tuned for the next update!

Below: Chaco Culture National Historical Park
©Golasza | Dreamstime



Drilling at Dinosaur's Doorstep?

As evidence of the need for federal oil and gas leasing reform, in May the Biden administration released a proposal to authorize drilling on a 16-year-old “zombie lease” (which should have expired years ago) within half a mile of Dinosaur National Monument. NPCA is working tirelessly to prevent drilling next to the park, and over 4,000 members and supporters submitted comments asking the administration to protect the park’s views, dark night skies, air and water. It is a constant struggle, but we are doing everything we can to curb industrialization in this spectacular wilderness-caliber landscape and sensitive sage grouse habitat.



Above: Dinosaur National Monument ©Zrffphoto | Dreamstime

Introducing Davina Smith, Southeast Utah Organizer and Tribal Coordinator

Davina Smith is a member of the Diné (Navajo) Tribe, originally from Monument Valley, Utah. She belongs to the Ta'chii' nii (Red Running into the Water) clan and is born to the Ta' baa ha' (Edgewater) clan. In July she joined the NPCA team as consulting organizer and Tribal coordinator to assist with the protection of the cultural landscape of southeast Utah. We are thrilled to have Davina's support on the coalition effort to protect the Lands Between in alignment with NPCA's national campaign to permanently protect 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030.



©Davina Smith

Davina's personal mission is advocating for Native families in both rural and urban communities as well as preserving and protecting the cultural and natural resources of ancestral Native American lands to

This was an opportunity I couldn't pass up, and I am tremendously grateful to have my boots on the ground, not only near Bears Ears but also Grand Staircase-Escalante.

— DAVINA SMITH

benefit and bring healing to people and the Earth. Davina holds board positions with Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners and Love is King (Portland, OR) and is the CEO of Haseya Native Initiatives LLC.



The Lands Between

Along with Tribal allies and several other conservation groups, NPCA is playing a key role developing a plan to protect one of the richest areas of ancestral cultural sites in the U.S. known as the "Lands Between."

Primarily Bureau of Land Management lands in southeast Utah situated between Bears Ears, Canyons of the Ancients and Hovenweep National Monuments, the Lands Between are the traditional lands of the Hopi, Zuni, Rio Grande Pueblos, Ute, Navajo, Paiute and other Indigenous people. The region is one of the most archaeologically rich landscapes in the country, yet pressure for oil and gas development is great here — despite the Biden administration pausing new oil and gas leasing back in January.

Between January and June of this year, industry nominated more than 20,000 acres to lease for drilling in the region. Although the Bureau cancelled lease sales for the first half of 2021, the industry requests are a sign that oil and gas companies and speculators

will continue to try to lock up this culturally important public landscape for extractive purposes. Development on this scale could lead to permanent destruction of sacred sites and exacerbate climate change.

In addition to interest in oil and gas, the Utah State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) recently approved nearly 15,000 acres of land near the Lands Between study area for helium exploration. As with oil and gas, helium exploration and development put the cultural and natural resources of the Lands Between at risk and increase pressure for helium development on adjacent lands.

NPCA and our coalition partners continue to work to build the capacity of Tribal partners to determine and lead long-term protection efforts, as we also advocate for the Biden administration to maintain the pause on leasing and development on federal lands within the Lands Between study area.

Above: Starry skies over cultural sites ©Mark Toso

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National Park System to develop even more workable solutions.

Crowding is one of the most pressing and perplexing issues facing parks today. We are up for the challenge to address it, while also working to ensure equitable access for those who've historically been left out of the park experience.

NPCA is working on solutions to crowding in a number of parks in the Southwest. According to 2019 visitation data, the Southwest is home to three of the five busiest parks in the National Park System: Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountain and Zion National Parks.



Above: Overcrowding at the Narrows in Zion National Park ©Miguel Santana



SOUTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
307 West 200 South • Suite 5000
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Amache Bill Moves Forward to Commemorate Living History

Days before the August recess, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Amache National Historic Site Act by an overwhelming margin of 416-2. The legislation — a bipartisan bill introduced by Colorado Representatives Neguse and Buck — will preserve and interpret the story of Amache, a World War II-era Japanese incarceration camp, also known as the Granada Relocation Center, in southeast Colorado. The site commemorates an important piece of American history and challenges us to heal and create a future where our national parks reflect the stories of all Americans. NPCA celebrates the passage of the bill in the House, and we hope to see the Senate take it up swiftly so this multigenerational story of tragedy and resilience will be protected in perpetuity as part of the National Park System.

Amache commemorates an important piece of American history and challenges us to heal and create a future where our national parks reflect the stories of all Americans.



Above: Guard tower and barracks at Amache (also known as the Granada Relocation Center) ©Mikaela Ruland

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