



Dinosaur Under Pressure

Pressure from different sectors — recreational infrastructure and industrial extraction — keep advocates like NPCA very busy as we strive to protect Dinosaur National Monument.

Recreation (especially motorized use) is growing on public lands adjacent to Dinosaur, and the Bureau of Land Management is conducting multiple processes to prepare to handle the increased use more sustainably. NPCA is evaluating proposals to improve Cliff Ridge Campground, establish recreation access zones in the new John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area, and re-assess many roads and routes on public lands. In all of these processes, we aim to protect Dinosaur's character and the important ecological role these adjacent lands serve.

Located in the oil and gas-producing Uinta Basin, Dinosaur frequently faces pressures from extractive industries. Currently, a disputed permit to drill two oil wells within a half-mile of the western boundary of Dinosaur is in play, and NPCA will continue to raise the alarm about the damaging impacts of drilling so near the park.

In a positive turn of events, a proposal to mine sand for fracking operations in the same area was postponed in August due

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It's About Time for Tribal Co-Stewardship

Signing of the inter-governmental cooperative agreement for Bears Ears National Monument in June marked a historic first step between U.S. land management agencies and the five Tribes who advocated for protection of this important landscape. These are public lands, and they will be protected for all Americans. But they are also sacred ancestral lands to the Hopi, Navajo (Diné), Ute Indian, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni Tribes who have a deep connection to the land and the traditional knowledge and wisdom to help manage it.

Now comes the hard work of creating a management process that recognizes and includes Indigenous values and voices in a meaningful way.

The five Tribes of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition recently released a Collaborative Land Management Plan for Bears Ears, which among other things calls for collaborative management of the monument with federal agencies, including equal consideration for Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and creating and funding full-time Tribal management staff. The Bureau of Land Management is

currently beginning its own management planning process and is expected to adopt many of the Coalition's proposals.



Even as some anti-monument interests continue to try to dismantle protections, federal agencies and Tribes are moving forward and NPCA supports Indigenous co-stewardship of Bears Ears. We are excited to see how it may serve as a model for public land management everywhere.

Top: Sunrise at Bandelier National Monument ©Dfikar | Dreamstime **Right:** Moon House ©BLM

OUR MISSION

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

FIELD REPORT

SUMMER | FALL 2022

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah

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A Bold New Approach to Park Visitation

In 2020 and 2021, headlines across the country showcased a pandemic-weary populace flocking to outdoor destinations like national parks in extraordinary numbers. In 2022, with gas prices on the rise and international travel back in a big way, visitation to national parks leveled off somewhat. For a few parks that struggled to accommodate high visitation levels even before the pandemic popularity surge, that leveling achieves what park managers were aiming for: a reliable, less chaotic visitor experience achieved through reservations.

In the Southwest, examples of successful reservation systems to address crowding and congestion include Arches National Park, which implemented a pilot timed-entry system this summer, and Rocky Mountain National Park, which finishes the third year of its timed-entry pilot in October. These new approaches to visitor use management offer insights about the visitor experience — including some opportunities for improvement.

Over the course of its 2022 pilot, Arches adjusted the number of tickets available each day to account for people who made

a reservation and failed to show up for it. Rocky Mountain (where the timed entry system has been refined over several seasons) now has two kinds of tickets to more effectively manage the number of visitors in the popular Bear Lake area. These adaptive changes are the hallmark of smart visitor use management operations.

Both Rocky Mountain and Arches are due for comprehensive visitor use management planning processes. Rocky Mountain will launch its process in December and Arches is in the preliminary stages of collecting comments and analyzing data and study results to inform its process. Through these planning processes, NPCA will advocate for the pilot reservation systems to become permanent and remain adaptive.

Reservations change the way we visit national parks, but they also help ensure high-quality visitor experiences, provide more certainty for travelers and protect the integrity of these special places in perpetuity.

Top: Sunset from Alpine Visitor Center at Rocky Mountain National Park ©Jacob W. Frank **Below:** Congestion on the two lane entrance road at Arches National Park ©Chris Wonderly | NPS



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to bureaucratic classifications about the sand and in consideration of priority sage grouse habitat. NPCA and our partners organized locally, and landowners and residents raised concerns about heavy truck traffic, noise and air pollution, water shortages, as well as the visual impairment brought on by such a large-scale industrial operation on currently undisturbed lands.

Opportunities to reimagine recreation and industry to provide sustainable use and safeguard the integrity of a wild place like Dinosaur National Monument is a constant balancing act. NPCA will continue tracking the many issues to keep you engaged.

Above: Dinosaur National Monument above Cub Creek Road/Sound of Silence Nature Trail
©Chris Boyer | Kestrel Aerial Services

Honoring Chaco

This summer the Bureau of Land Management launched the Honoring Chaco Initiative, a new process to identify the complex web of interests in the landscape surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park. NPCA participated as one of the stakeholders invested in the long-term, holistic wellbeing of the park, the greater landscape and connected communities. We appreciate this new approach by the Bureau to meaningfully include more perspectives in landscape-level planning for this important place.



At the same time, we continue to work with the New Mexico Congressional delegation and the Department of Interior on long-term solutions to protect sacred sites, community health and natural resources around Chaco. Stay tuned for more updates on the campaign to balance the wide range of interests in this interconnected region.

Above: A sunset view of an ancient stone wall in Chaco Culture National Historical Park
©James Stewart | Dreamstime



Parks, Climate and Air

This summer was full of highs and lows in the effort to position parks to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in August contained the most significant investment in climate measures the U.S. has ever taken. What's more, national parks and Bureau of Land Management lands will benefit from the bill with a billion-dollar funding influx for staff and resources for climate change resiliency. It's a bill of historic import for people, our parks and our future.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court ruled in *West Virginia v. EPA* that the Clean Air Act does not give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority to shift

energy generation through the regulation of power plant emissions. The decision is a blow to EPA's autonomy and constrains a critical tool for addressing greenhouse gas emissions. And yet, the decision left in place EPA's ability to regulate greenhouse gas pollution and left open additional potential avenues for doing so outside of control technologies. NPCA's clean air and climate work will continue and adapt as we fight for meaningful climate action across actors and sectors.

On clean air specifically, here in the Southwest, we continue to hold regulators' feet to the fire to clean up the air over national parks. Two of Utah's biggest polluters, PacifiCorp's Hunter and Huntington coal

fired power plants, are among the top 20 worst park polluters in the nation, and they need to be retrofitted with emissions controls. This summer, despite vociferous concerns about haze pollution harming public health, scenic views, park visitors and local communities, the Utah Air Quality Board voted to submit a regional haze plan that does nothing to cut pollution from the two plants. It is now up to EPA to hold Utah accountable for the serious flaws in their state haze plan and to help achieve their collective goals of improving air quality and protecting parks and people from harmful pollution.

Above: Rocky Mountain National Park
©Jacob W. Frank



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The Good, the Bad and the Ugly at Grand Canyon

Grand Canyon Protection Act

Early this summer the U.S. Senate held a hearing on the Grand Canyon Protection Act, which would ban new uranium mining on approximately one million acres of public lands surrounding Grand Canyon National Park. NPCA added its park advocate voice to a broad coalition of Indigenous Tribes and conservation groups urging the Senate to act swiftly on the bill — which has already passed the House — and protect the canyon, as well as waters vital to Tribes.

Predatory Fish

This summer scientists made a heartbreaking discovery — smallmouth bass in Lake Powell have breached Glen Canyon Dam and are

now disrupting the ecosystem in the Grand Canyon downstream. As a non-native, predatory species, smallmouth bass will have a devastating effect on native species like the humpback chub, which biologists and managers worked for decades to restore. (So successful that just last year the fish was down listed from “endangered” to “threatened.”) With the aggressive smallmouth bass now in the Grand Canyon river habitat, native fish hardly stand a chance. The situation is as consequential and complex as its cause — drought driven by climate change dropped the levels of Lake Powell enough for warm, bass-friendly waters to reach the dam’s hydro-power intake. But small steps *could* help stem the

flow of catastrophe, and NPCA is advocating for the funds and attention from the Bureau of Reclamation to give the native fish a fighting chance.

Above: Havasu Creek in the Grand Canyon
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