

# Aztec Ruins

National Monument  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

## Changes Ahead

Echoes from the past invite visitors to explore and speculate about Aztec Ruins National Monument. These unique remains that are so fragile, yet have withstood the ravages of time, are experiencing changes that will help their preservation and broaden our understanding of them.

### EXPANDED BOUNDARIES

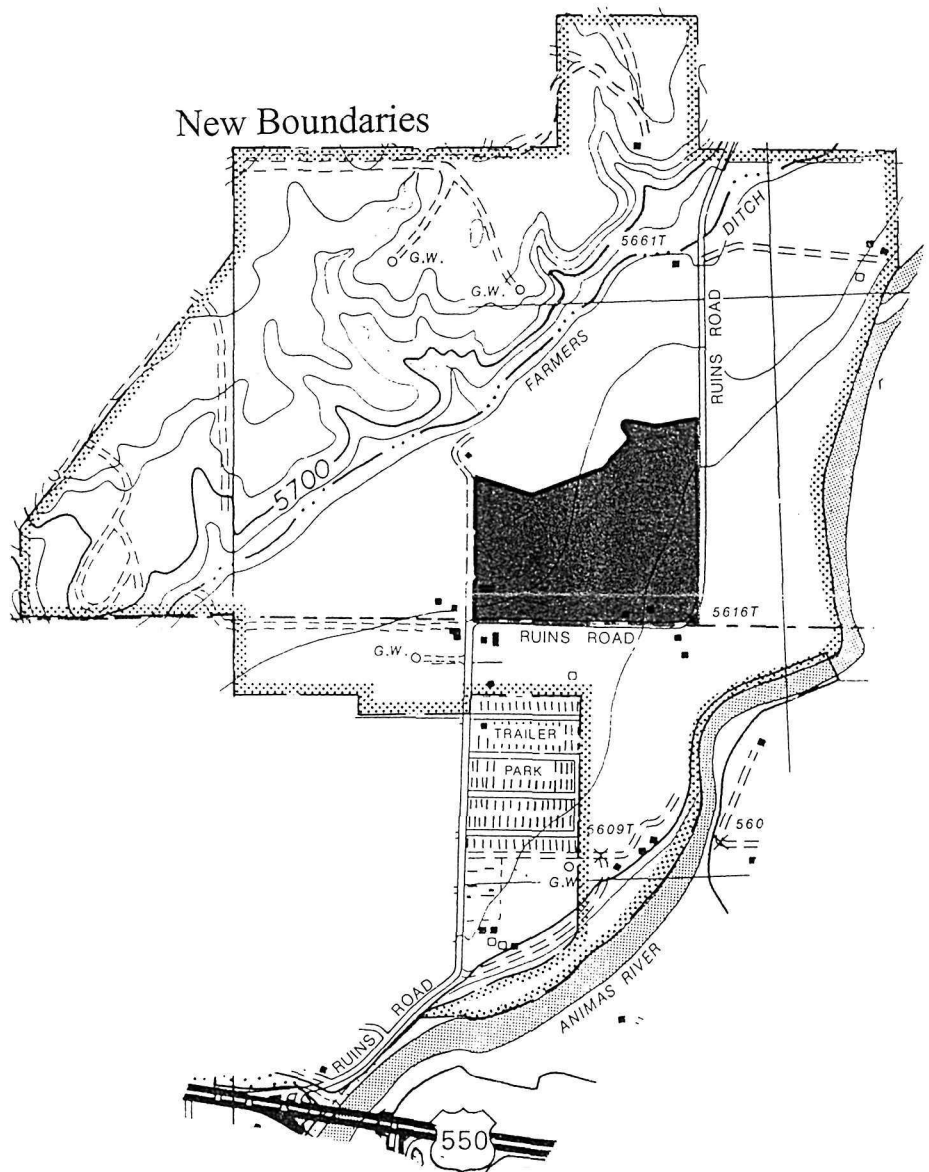
Growing concerns for the protection of Aztec Ruins, along with increased visitor use and a need for more efficient operations prompted Congress to pass legislation in 1988 that expanded the monument's boundaries from 27.14 acres to almost 320 acres.

The expanded boundaries encompass private lands surrounding the original monument. Parcels include the three trading posts near the visitor center, and others abundant with prehistoric buildings, earthworks, kivas, and road segments that enlarge the story at Aztec Ruins. Congress appropriated \$500,000 in 1992 to begin purchasing these parcels.

### A LONG RANGE PLAN

With the additional acreage, the National Park Service and the public developed a long range management plan. The plan guides the land acquisition process, and proposes solutions for management problems facing the monument.

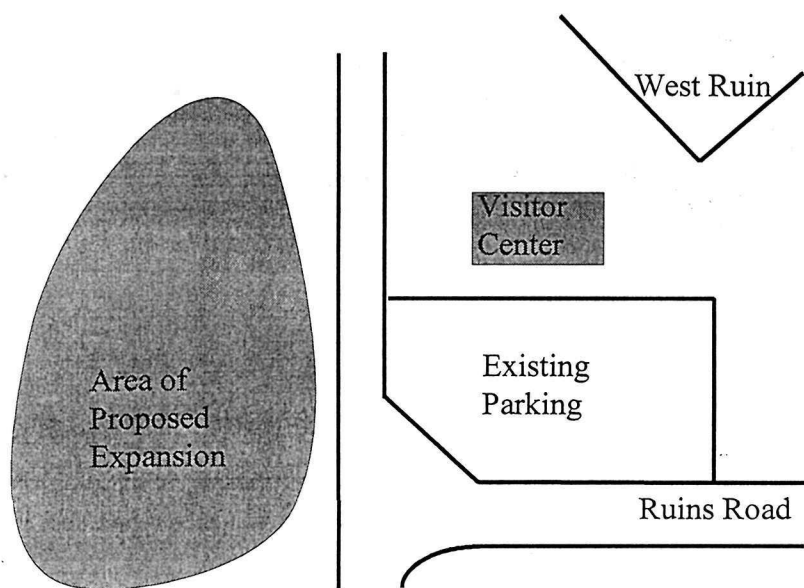
Some of those problems include:



- The visitor center is too small to adequately serve visitors and provide office space for the growing monument staff.
- Nearby archeological sites essential to research and increased understanding are exposed to vandalism.
- Incompatible use, such as residential and oil and gas development will increase.

- More parking is needed for increased visitation.
- Irrigation of land north of the ruins saturates the soil and contributes to deterioration of prehistoric walls.
- Maintenance work, roads, and buildings in the monument detract from the visitor experience, affect archeological sites, and hinder operations.





To alleviate some of these problems, the management plan calls for expansion of parking, office, and work facilities to the west of the present visitor center. This is the best direction to grow because it is near the visitor center, intrudes little on the visitor experience of the ruins, and will affect archeological remains the least because of previous building disturbance.

Because of the immediate need for parking and more facilities, the National Park Service purchased several high priority parcels, including the Aztec Ruins and Monument Trading Posts and their associated buildings. This provided some parking and allowed several employees to move into much needed office and work space. Negotiations to purchase other parcels needed for facility

expansion continue.

Land north of the ruins is also high priority. Acquisition will allow control of irrigation that harms the ruins, and protection of archeological sites from vandalism. But this acquisition, and the remodeling or building of new facilities, await additional appropriations from Congress.

## LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS

The land acquisition process follows well established procedures. An independent contract appraiser first provides an objective estimate of the fair market value of the lands to be purchased. A National Park Service Staff Appraiser reviews the appraisal to ensure proper procedures were followed. After appraisal approval, the

National Park Service solicits from the owner a written offer that is not less than the fair market appraised value of the property. The National Park Service makes every effort to obtain a negotiated settlement. However, if this is not possible, eminent domain proceedings can begin.

Depending on development plans, some landowners may continue to live on the land

after acquisition. Relocation benefits are provided where applicable. Owners of the trading posts may continue operating their businesses until the National Park Service is ready to construct visitor and administrative facilities on those particular tracts. This arrangement was negotiated with owners of both the Aztec Ruins and Monument Trading Posts.

## QUESTIONS, COMMENTS

While fulfilling the mandates of Congress and carrying out the management plan, the National Park Service seeks to reduce the disruption to the lives of the affected landowners near Aztec Ruins. Please write or call with your comments and questions: Superintendent, Aztec Ruins National Monument, P.O. Box 640, Aztec, New Mexico 87410 (505) 334-6174 (voice or TDD).