



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

California
2022: Annual Manager's Report

Carrizo Plain National Monument



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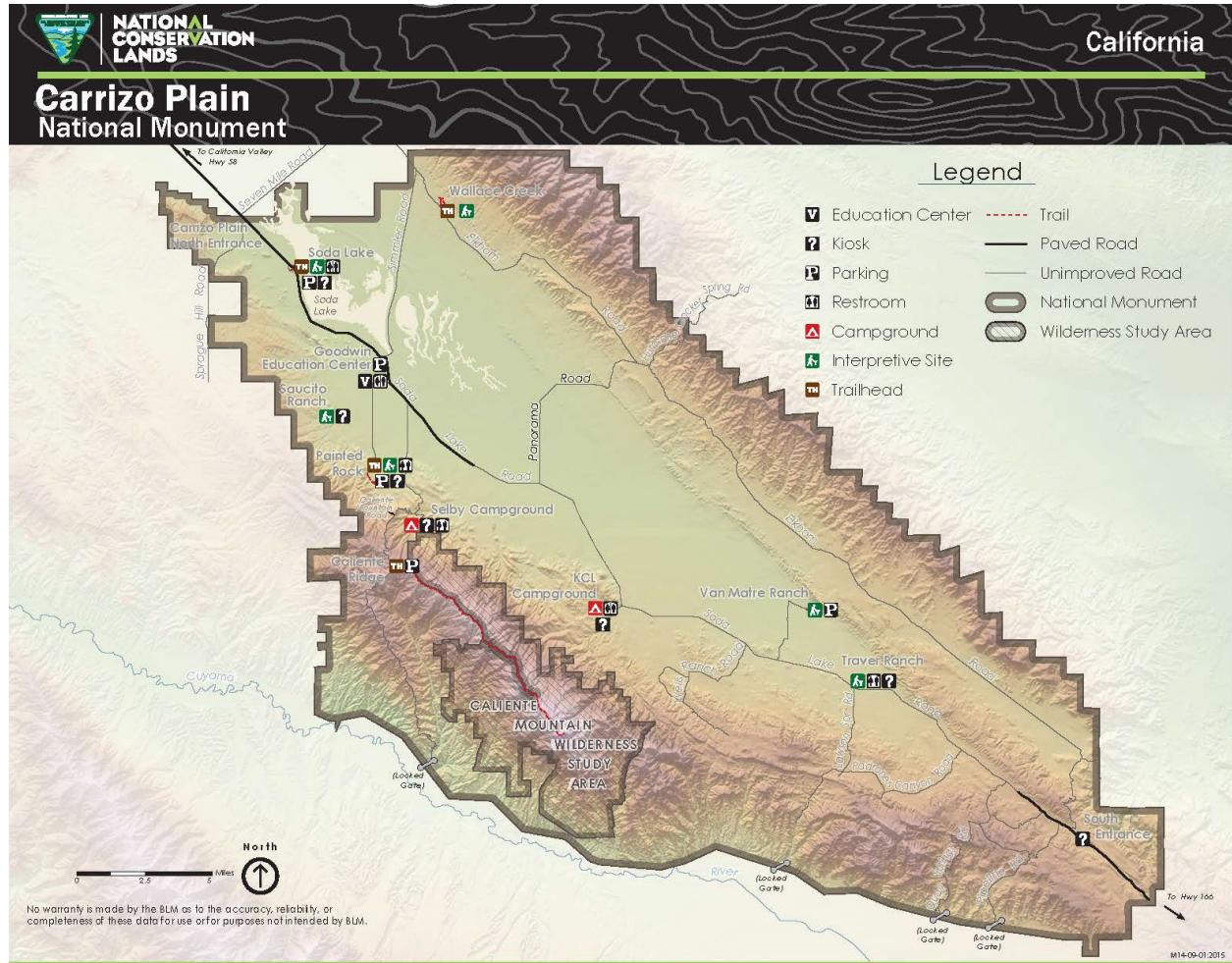
Carrizo Plain National Monument

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management



Managed in Partnership with the
California Department of Fish & Wildlife
and The Nature Conservancy

Map



Accomplishments

The Carrizo Plain National Monument (the Monument) had many accomplishments this year. The biggest one was the completion of the addition to the visitor center. The expansion provides more room for interpretive displays and has a conference room to showcase videos featuring the monument's wildlife and other educational materials. An additional counter was added for sales as well as new office space for staff. Since it opened, visitors have enjoyed the new conference room, displays and interpretive materials.

Other accomplishments include hiring a new wildlife biologist and a park ranger to assist in patrolling and staffing the visitor center.



Photo of the Goodwin Education Center, circa 2007, prior to the 2022 expansion of 800 sq. ft.



Photos of the Goodwin Education Center after the expansion to 1600 sq. ft.

Challenges

As visitation continues to steadily increase, one challenge is to protect resources from vehicle impacts. With limited patrols due to unfilled positions, we saw impacts to the landscape as well as recreational facilities. This has been mitigated by filling some of the vacant positions which provide more of a presence on the monument curtailing some of this activity. Increased visitation also put more strain on the recreation facilities such as campgrounds, interpretive sites and dispersed camping areas. Monitoring the dispersed areas to ensure resources weren't damaged was an ongoing effort. We also experienced an increased level of roadside trash throughout the monument.



Vandals caused irreparable damage to this kiosk which talks about the natural and human history of the monument.

Visitors

The Monument received 66,849 visits this year; typical visitation for a non-wildflower year is 50,000 to 60,000 visitors. The higher visitation numbers could be attributed to the public looking for the kind of wide-open spaces the monument provides. Dispersed camping, hiking, wildlife and wildflower viewing, hunting and exploring continue to be the most popular recreational activities. Guided tours to some of our significant cultural sites are very popular and fill up every year. Self-guided tours to cultural sites are also available throughout most of the year.



Visitors setting up camp at KCL campground.

Partnerships

The Monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with important cooperative partnerships with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). With a strong working relationship each organization builds off their strengths to contribute to the overall management of the monument. The monument's Friends group, The Friends of the Carrizo, works closely with the BLM to support efforts of the monument and its ongoing projects. They contributed significantly to developing new interpretive displays for the visitor center addition. They continue to support volunteer efforts as well as provide interpretive brochures and signs for the monument.

The Native American Advisory Council continues to support the management of the monument. Their input on projects and natural resources protection helps guide the overall direction of management. The council members continue to provide guidance on interpretive materials for the monument.

Gateway communities continue to support the monument by distributing interpretive and educational information to visitors in their communities throughout the year. Volunteers continue to support monument volunteer workdays, give tours, and update interpretive materials in the visitor center.

Science

Research continues to be an important component of the Monument. Long term studies in collaboration with local universities aid in the management of some of the endangered species found on the Monument. Studies underway include research on demographics of the Giant Kangaroo Rat, and surveys of San Joaquin Valley Kit Fox populations. Annual surveys are conducted for local populations of Burrowing Owls, LeConte's Thrashers, and Pallid Bats while winter surveys assess the temporary winter habitat use of migrating raptors, Long-billed Curlews, and Mountain Plovers.

Monument staff are also working with botanical researchers on monitoring several endangered plants. Long-term vegetation plot monitoring offers glimpses into a changing landscape, and one affected by periodic drought.

New species to science are still being discovered in this unique landscape. The Soda Lake Scorpion (*Paruroctonus soda*), for example, was recently described in a 2022 publication. Also noted in 2022 were an undescribed species of jumping spider (*Terralonus* sp.).



LeContes Thrasher in the brush.

Climate Impacts and Resiliency

The Carrizo Plain National Monument continues to be in a cycle of drought. Periods of drier conditions outnumber the number of normal rainfall years. Total annual rainfall in 2022 was 5.64 inches, compared with 2021's annual rain fall of 8.36 inches (based on Remote Automated Weather Station records), which is in the normal range for the area. Decreased rainfall affects vegetation types and growth and this also influences the animal species in the monument. Additionally, because of the drier conditions and seasonal peak temperatures topping 115°, wildfires can start more easily and move rapidly through the grassland.

Monument staff continue to shift some of the water wells that were traditionally pumped by gas-powered generators to solar pumps. Staff have identified additional wells to transition to solar in the next few years.



A view of Carrizo Plain with clouds and sky.

Social and Environmental Justice

Throughout the season Carrizo hosts tours for schools, organizations, and the general public. The Friends of the Carrizo offers funding to bus local schools out to the monument that otherwise wouldn't be able to come due to lack of funding. Visitors come from all over the world to see the wildflower displays when they are in bloom.



Kitfox displays used to educate the public about the endangered species and their habitat.

Events

National Public Lands Day was a great event. The support from the public was overwhelming. The event was held at the visitor center. Many tasks were accomplished including trail work, general cleaning of the facility, removal of dead vegetation, installation of a new barrier fence and repair of interpretive signs. The Friends of the Carrizo supported the workday by providing volunteers and lunch to all participants. Volunteers came from local communities, metropolitan cities as well as students from the local university. Lots of work was accomplished and a good time was had by all.



Staff and volunteers join together to help clean up the Goodwin Education Center during National Public Lands Day 2022.



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