



Enjoy the View – Visual Resources Inventory Report

Chaco Culture National Historical Park

Natural Resource Report NPS/CHCU/NRR—2016/1353



ON THE COVER

Photograph of Fajada Butte at sunset in Chaco Culture National Historical Park

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Abstract

At Chaco Culture National Historical Park a vital element to providing an depth cultural experience for visitors is the mostly undisturbed, natural landscape. The Chaco culture extended over a vast area of the southwest and maintaining a visual connection between communities and important cultural sites was critical. This visual resource inventory was undertaken to identify the scenic quality and importance of the visual landscape to the NPS and its visitors and provides a baseline against which to compare potential impacts of potential development both in and around the park

The NPS inventory process consists of two components – scenic quality and view importance. The inventory determined that nearly all views the views have high scenic quality. The views from many locations lacked significant evidence of human presence offer visitors the opportunity to experience the Chaco connection to the landscape. Importance values were mostly rated as moderate to high as most all views were considered important to Chaco’s interpretative themes, but visitor levels and facilities varied somewhat with access and distance from the visitor center.

Acknowledgments

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Keywords

Visual resources, scenic resources, scenery, viewsheds, scenic inventory, Chaco Culture National Historical Park

1. Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) Organic Act identifies the purpose of establishing the NPS: "...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." With this central mission NPS has been entrusted with some of the most spectacular and historically significant landscapes throughout the country.

Each unit of the national park system has special visual characteristics that are often a central component to the unit's visitor experience. Visitors typically rank scenic views as one of the top five reasons for visiting a park (Kulesza, 2013). Inspiring vistas can lift the human spirit, expand our sense of place, and provide connections to the natural world and our history as a country.

From a cultural and historical perspective, views are not just about the scenery, but an important way to better understand the connection between natural and cultural resources. This is especially true at Chaco Culture National Historical Park (NHP) as many of the sites and roads were built in locations that had clear lines of sight across vast areas of the landscape. Visualizing this connection as part of the landscape is a critical part of the visitor experience.

The NPS Director Jonathan B. Jarvis issued a 5-year "Call to Action" plan for moving toward its second century. The purpose of the Enjoy the View Call to Action item is to ensure that by protecting visual resources and air quality the NPS can actively preserve these stunning and historically significant views for future generations. Many of these views extend beyond park boundaries and can be affected by actions outside parks that impact air quality and adjoining land use. As part of Enjoy the View Call to Action, Chaco Culture completed a visual resource inventory.

The specific objectives of the visual resources inventory were to:

1. Conduct visual resource inventory assessment that establish a baseline crucial for park planning and internal and external decisions that may impact scenic, cultural, and natural resources;
2. Identify, describe, and map scenic resources at Chaco Culture NHP; and
3. Provide an understanding of the value of clean air and scenic views and inform collaborative protection efforts with a variety of stakeholders.

2. Methods

2.1 Visual Resource Inventory Overview

The visual resource inventory identified key facts about the scenic views at Chaco Culture NHP. The unit of inventory was “a view” consisting of the viewpoint, the viewed landscape, and potential viewers, i.e., park visitors. The inventory consists of both fieldwork associated with view description and scenic quality ratings, and an office-based process for assigning importance values to the views. See Appendix A for additional details on the inventory methodology.

The scenic quality rating is based on its perceived visual attractiveness, as determined by the aesthetic composition of the visual elements. The scenic quality assessment at Chaco NHP was conducted June 8-12, 2014. The process included photo documentation, written descriptive information about the viewpoint and viewed landscape to inform the rating process, and the scenic quality rating for each view. The scenic quality rating for each view resulted from group discussion exercises. The ratings were based on scores from three scenic quality factors: landscape character integrity, vividness, and visual harmony. Scenic quality ratings fall into five classes: from A to E based on how high they score. Class A views have the highest scenic quality and class E the lowest.

View importance ratings identify NPS and visitor values for the views. The view importance assessment also identifies key descriptive information about the viewpoint and viewed landscape to inform the rating process. The view importance evaluation for each viewpoint was conducted by Chaco park staff on September 22, 2014, by assessing the following factors: viewpoint importance, viewed landscape importance, and viewer concern. Each factor was assessed by the team and resulted in a single view importance rating for the view. View importance ratings fall into five classes from 1 to 5 based on how high they score. Class 1 views have the highest view importance and Class 5 the lowest.

2.2 View Selection

Chaco Culture NHP selected 26 views for the visual resource inventory to establish a baseline of the existing conditions of throughout the park. (Table 1, Figure 1). The selection process was based on the following general criteria:

- Critical inventory priorities include views that are highly valued as part of the visitor experience or where there is an immediate threat to the view from a proposed project or land management or development decisions.
- Moderate inventory priorities included views that are not likely subject to changes in the view in the near future but where eventual land management or development could affect the view.
- Low inventory priorities included views that are currently somewhat protected from visual intrusions, and if needed, could be included in the inventory at a later time.

Table 1. Views Inventoried at Chaco Culture NHP

#	View Name	Latitude Coordinate	Longitude Coordinate	Bearing	Approximate Width of View
1	Visitor Center Entry	36.0300830	-107.910305	78E/200S	135
2	Una Vida Greathouse	36.0338580	-107.911955	90E/270W	180
3	Campground Trail	36.0295020	-107.901921	60E/260W	180
4	Gallo Campground	36.0364000	-107.891180	N/A	360
5	Verizon Hill	36.0660516	-107.847355	142S/251W	90
6	Fajada View Overlook	36.0283533	-107.9039217	160S/240S	90
7	Penasco Blanco NE	36.0820100	-108.002675	340N/162S	180
8	Penasco Blanco SW	36.0815231	-108.0035683	168S/352N	180
9	Tsin Kletzin	36.0364133	-107.957755	108E/260W	225
10	South Gap	36.0385767	-107.9658083	207S/354N	180
11	Casa Rinconada	36.0548983	-107.960145	152S/330N	180
12	Shabik'eschee	36.0163583	-107.8501633	144S/008N	135
13	Hungo Pavi	36.0503000	-107.929350	90E/270W	180
14	Pueblo Bonito (Threatening Rock)	36.0608200	-107.960920	N/A	360
15	Pueblo del Arroyo	36.0613500	-107.965510	N/A	360
16	Pueblo Alto	36.0700700	-107.957880	N/A	360
17	Pueblo Pintado	36.9774300	-107.674210	30N/190S	180
18	Kin Klizhin	36.0289300	-108.072900	N/A	360
19	Kin Bineola	36.0034000	-107.140490	N/A	360
20	South Entrance	36.0166583	-107.9238633	340N/150S	180
21	Petroglyph Trail	36.0746267	-107.986595	118E/300W	180
22	Wijiji	36.0260300	-107.86962	81E/288W	180
23	Pueblo Bonito Overlook (on mesa)	36.0618700	-107.962130	113E/264W	180
24	Kin Kletso	36.0653500	-107.969190	??/276W	180
25	Pueblo Pintado Plaza	35.9768700	-107.673590	N/A	360
26	Kin Ya'a	35.6760400	-108.113780	N/A	360

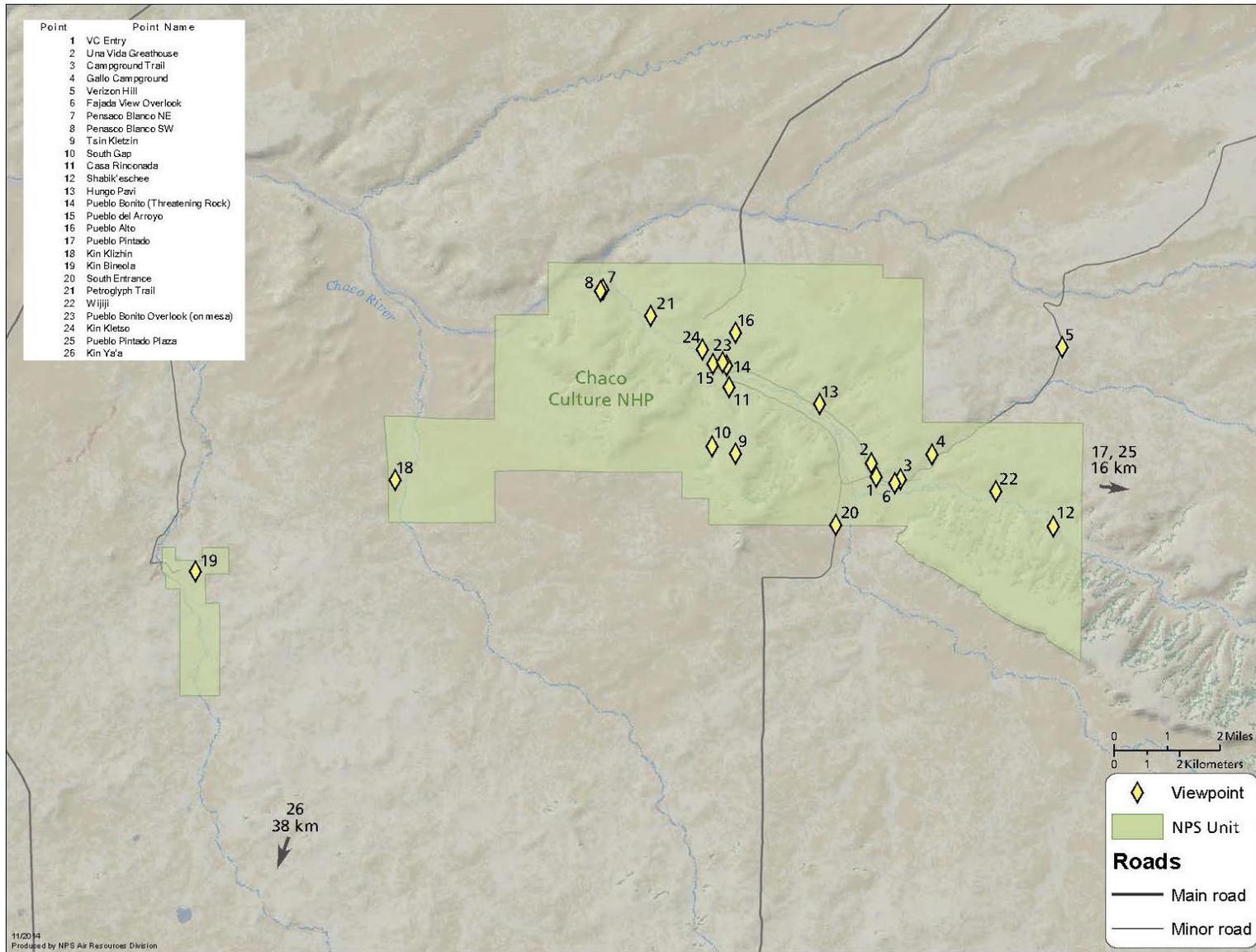


Figure 1 – Chaco NHP Inventory Viewpoints

2.3 Scenic Inventory Value

The scenic inventory value (SIV) is the combination of the scenic quality (SQ) and view importance ratings (VI) and is derived using a matrix (Figure 2) to arrive at one of five possible SIVs ranging from very low (VL) to very high (VH). The SIV and all other data collected during the scenic quality and view importance evaluations are stored in a geospatial database.

Scenic Inventory Value Matrix						
		View Importance Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
Scenic Quality	A	VH	VH	VH	H	M
	B	VH	VH	H	M	L
	C	H	H	M	L	L
	D	H	M	L	VL	VL
	E	M	L	VL	VL	VL

Figure 2 – Scenic Inventory Value Matrix

3. Summary of Findings

3.1. Landscape Character at Chaco Culture NHP

Chaco Culture NHP is located northwestern New Mexico and falls in the San Juan Basin and southeast corner of the Colorado Plateau. The visual character of the park is influenced by the semi-arid desert steppe climate and rugged topography of grassland plains and valleys interspersed by buttes, canyons, and mesas (EPA, 2014). The physical landscape consists of prominent land forms including the alluvium-filled valley floor of Chaco Canyon, expansive sandstone mesas and buttes topped by slickrock outcrops and gently rolling hills and small side canyons adjacent to the main canyon floor.

Landscape character is based on the physical objects and patterns in the landscape and represents a distinct, recognizable visual composition that makes one landscape different from another. At Chaco the overall landscape is natural appearing and there are generally few modern visual intrusions that are out of context with the park setting. The undisturbed landscape helps visitors put the archeological sites in context and understand the prehistoric road and trade networks that connected the Chacoan people culture to the greater Chaco landscape.

3.2. Scenic Quality, Importance Ratings

Most of the views at Chaco Culture NHP have a scenic quality rating of A or B (Table 2). At many locations, while the visitor attention is directed to the finer details in the immediate foreground; such as the historic structures, the surrounding landscape and distant views create the visual setting for the site and can help connect the visitor to the historic past. The location of the inventory viewpoints are shown in Figure 1. An overview of the scenic quality and view importance ratings at each location is below and the viewpoints have been grouped together for discussion purposes by general geographic areas. Panoramic photos from each viewpoint can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.1. Visitor Center and Park Entry Areas

The view along the park entrance road from “Verizon” hill (viewpoint #5) provides one of the first glimpses of the park and one of its primary features, Fajada Butte (Figure 3). Verizon Hill is so named locally because it is the last location to receive cell phone service before entering into the park where there is no coverage. While not a designated geographic location it is an important location because the viewpoint is elevated in relation to the park and offers an expansive vista of the sloping landforms and mesas that form Chaco Canyon. Fajada Butte comes into view as one continues toward the park but is subsequently screened as one descends past the park entrance and into the small canyon of Gallo Wash. The view is relatively undisturbed, with few visual intrusions and received a scenic quality rating of A (Table 2). The inventory noted a high level of integrity and visual harmony, with few visual intrusions in the landscape. The entrance road provides the visible link to the park but is designed such that it blends well with the landforms and creates a sense of arrival to the park.

This viewpoint received an importance rating of 4. While most all visitors access the park from the north road there are no interpretive facilities at this location and other than a few visitors who briefly

stop to take pictures at the entry sign it is not considered a designated viewpoint or visitor stop location.

Table 2. Scenic Quality, View Importance Ratings and Scenic Inventory Values

#	View Name	Scenic Quality Rating	View Importance Rating	Scenic Inventory Value
1	Visitor Center Entry	B	2	Very High
2	Una Vida Greathouse	B	2	Very High
3	Campground Trail	A	4	High
4	Gallo Campground	C	3	Moderate
5	Verizon Hill	A	4	High
6	Fajada View Overlook	A	3	Very High
7	Penasco Blanco NE	A	2	Very High
8	Penasco Blanco SW	A	2	Very High
9	Tsin Kletzin	A	3	Very High
10	South Gap	A	4	High
11	Casa Rinconada	A	1	Very High
12	Shabik'eschee	A	4	High
13	Hungo Pavi	A	2	Very High
14	Pueblo del Arroyo	A	2	Very High
15	Pueblo Bonito (Threatening Rock)	A	1	Very High
16	Pueblo Alto	A	2	Very High
17	Pueblo Pintado	A	3	Very High
18	Kin Klizhin	A	3	Very High
19	Kin Bineola	A	3	Very High
20	South Entrance	B	4	Moderate
21	Petroglyph Trail	B	3	High
22	Wijiji	B	3	High
23	Pueblo Bonito Overlook (on mesa)	B	2	Very High
24	Kin Kletso	B	2	Very High
25	Pueblo Pintado Plaza	B	3	High
26	Kin Ya'a	B	4	Moderate

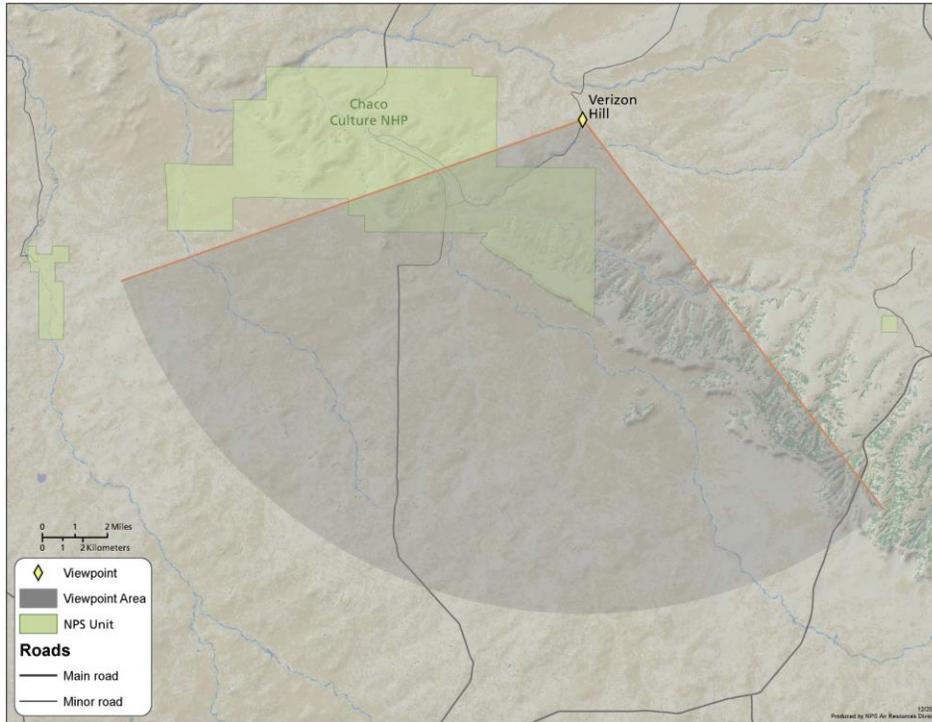


Figure 3. View area of Verizon hill

A cluster of views were inventoried around the visitor center, as this is one of the most highly visited areas of the park (Figure 1). Fajada Butte is a primary focal point of these viewpoints and is also a primary subject of interpretation. The views from the visitor center (#1) and the Fajada View Overlook (#6) feature the butte as a central feature (Figures 4, 5, 6). The view from Una Vida (#2) is similar to the visitor center except from an elevated position (Figure 6). Chacra Mesa, and to a lesser extent South Mesa, serve as framing elements, with expansive views of the open landscape to the south of the park. The rolling to flat landscape surrounding the butte and mesa landforms is covered with sage scrub vegetation and generally few structures or intrusions are visible except for the south entrance road to the park. The view from the visitor center also has several park directional and traffic control signs that are prominent in the immediate foreground and somewhat diminish the quality of the visual experience.



Figure 4. View of Fajada Butte from Visitor Center

The view from the campground trail (#3) is similar to Fajada View Overlook except that it is from an elevated position (Figure 6). The main park road and improvements at the Fajada View overlook are visible in the foreground, and the south entrance road is slightly more prominent. The elevated location provides a broader overview of the open, undisturbed landscape to the south of the butte and beyond the park.

Fajada View and the campground trail received a scenic quality rating of *A*, with the views displaying a high level of integrity and visual harmony among the landforms and colors in the landscape and the strong focal point of Fajada Butte. The view from the visitor center received a scenic quality rating of *B* because the signs in the immediate foreground created a somewhat cluttered view. While the elevated location of Una Vida offers an expansive view including Fajada Butte and the surrounding landscape this view also received a scenic quality rating of *B* primarily because the visitor center and associated facilities are dominant features in the foreground.

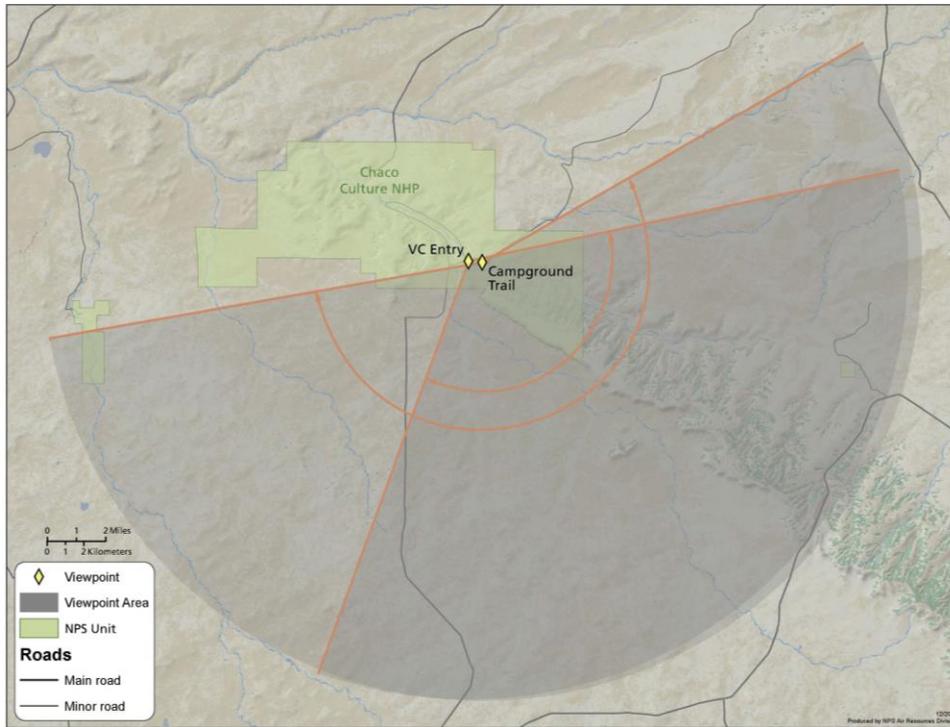


Figure 5. View areas of Visitor Center entry and campground trail

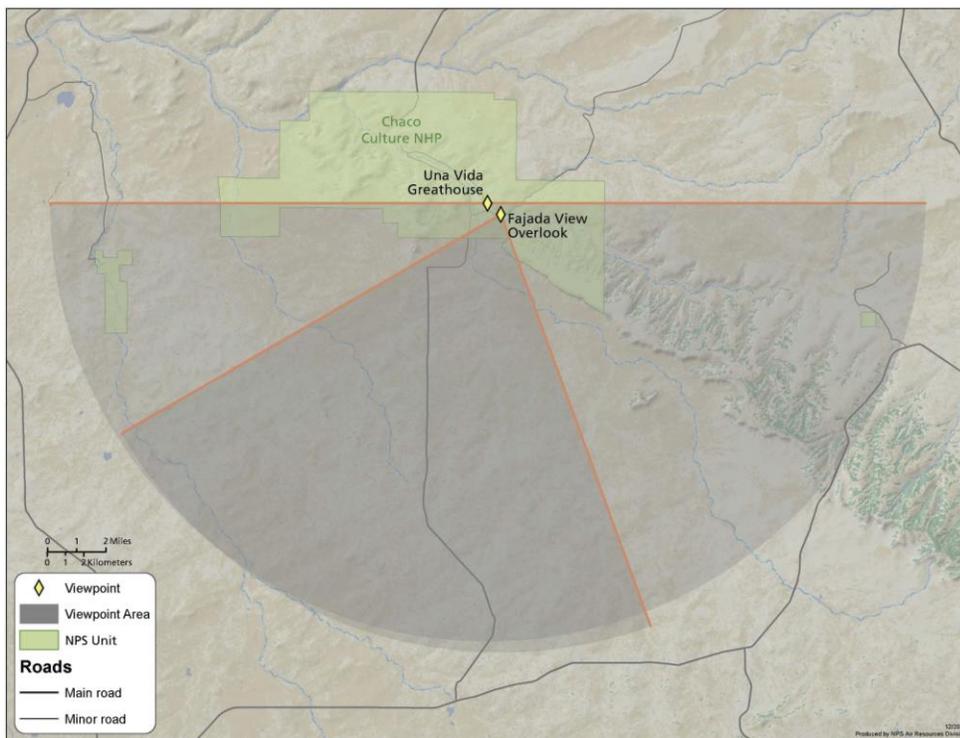


Figure 6. View areas of Una Vida Greathouse and Fajada View Overlook

The views from the visitor center and Una Vida both received importance ratings of 2. The visitor center is the most visited location in the park and has interpretive exhibits about the park and overall Chaco landscape. There would likely be a reduced sensitivity to additional elements in the landscape because existing facilities are already within the view and are an expected part of the visual experience at these locations. However, the open landscape with Fajada Butte as a focal point is an important interpretive component for the park. Una Vida also gets a high level of visitation because of the proximity to the visitor center and viewing the Fajada Butte landscape from within the archaeological sites allows visitors to feel the sense of connection of the Chacoan people to the landscape. The Campground Trail received an importance rating of 4 because it is not a highly publicized location and has a low level of visitation. There are also no interpretive facilities at the viewpoint, though, as noted, the view of Fajada Butte and the surrounding landscape is an important component of the interpretive story at Chaco

Another viewpoint selected in the vicinity of the visitor center was the south entrance (#20) to the park (Figure 7). The view from this location also has Fajada Butte as a strong focal point but from a different perspective, with Chacra Mesa a partial backdrop for the butte. Though the area around the viewpoint is mostly undisturbed except for the park entry sign, the view is somewhat diminished by the visibility of the visitor center and other park facilities, particularly the housing area at the base of North Mesa. Though viewers would normally expect to see some structures associated with providing visitor services, the view received a scenic quality rating of *B* because the contrasting forms and colors of the structures distract from the natural landscape setting.

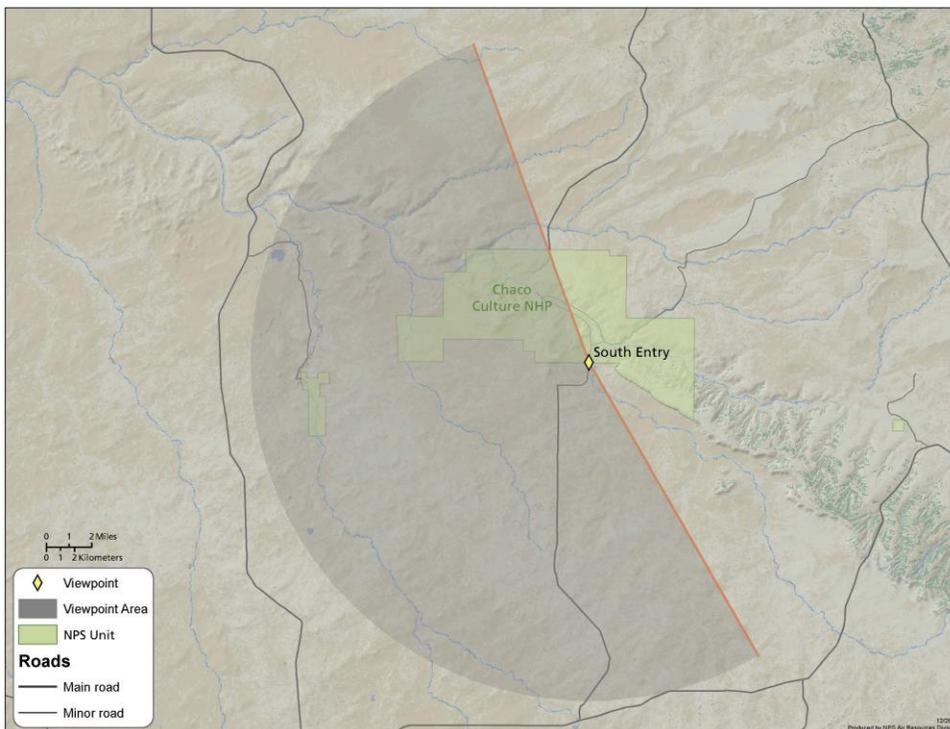


Figure 7. View area of the south entrance

3.2.2. Mesa Top Viewpoints

West of the visitor center in Chaco Canyon, Pueblo Bonito and the surrounding archeological sites are the heart of Chaco Canyon and also one of the most visited areas of the park. Two viewpoints, Pueblo Bonito Overlook (#23) and Kin Kletso (#24), overlook their respective sites and also offer distant views through South Gap beyond the park's southern boundary (Figures 8, 9). The area known as South Gap is the space between South Mesa and West Mesa and the views through the gap help put the archeological sites in context in the canyon and show their connection to the surrounding landscape. One can also view up and down Chaco Canyon from these locations and view other archeological sites such as Casa Rinconada and Hungo Pavi. Though the landscape as viewed through South Gap is undisturbed except for a park road, the foreground views also include park

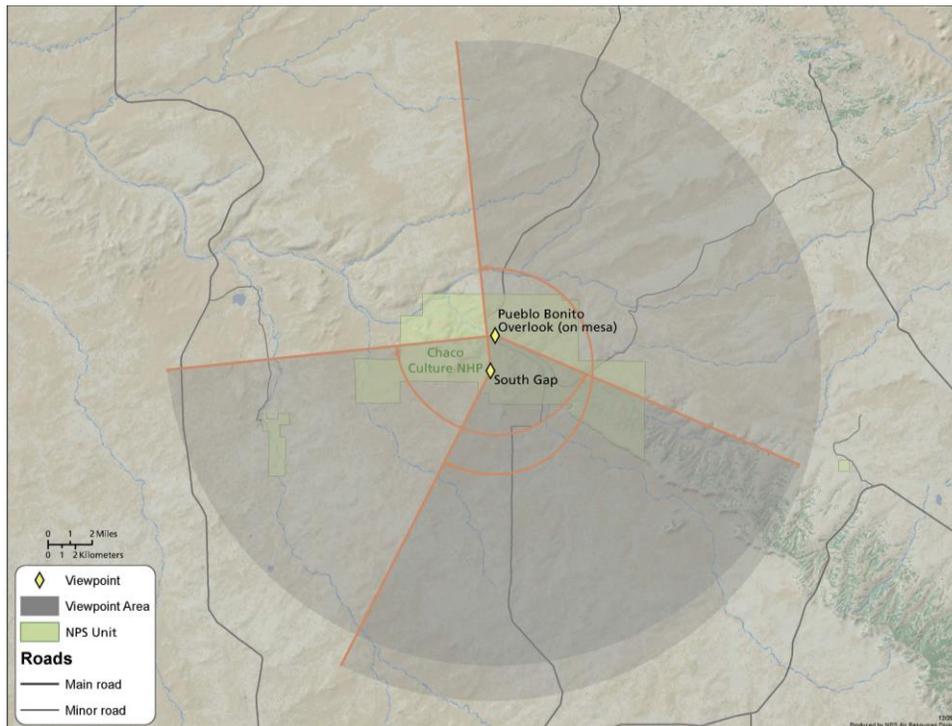


Figure 8. View area of Pueblo Bonito Overlook and South Gap

roads, facilities and signs in Chaco Canyon associated with the access and maintenance of the archeological sites. Both views received a scenic quality rating of *B* because of the contrast of these inconsistent elements with the natural landscape and the historic structures of the sites. Located within South Gap, the South Gap viewpoint (#10) is on a trail descending from South Mesa (Figure 8). This viewpoint offers a view framed by South Mesa and West Mesa to the expansive landscape beyond. This view received a scenic quality rating of *A* because the colors and landforms of the two mesas add interest to the view. It also lacks the park intrusions visible from the other locations, and the open landscape beyond the mesas is almost completely undisturbed.

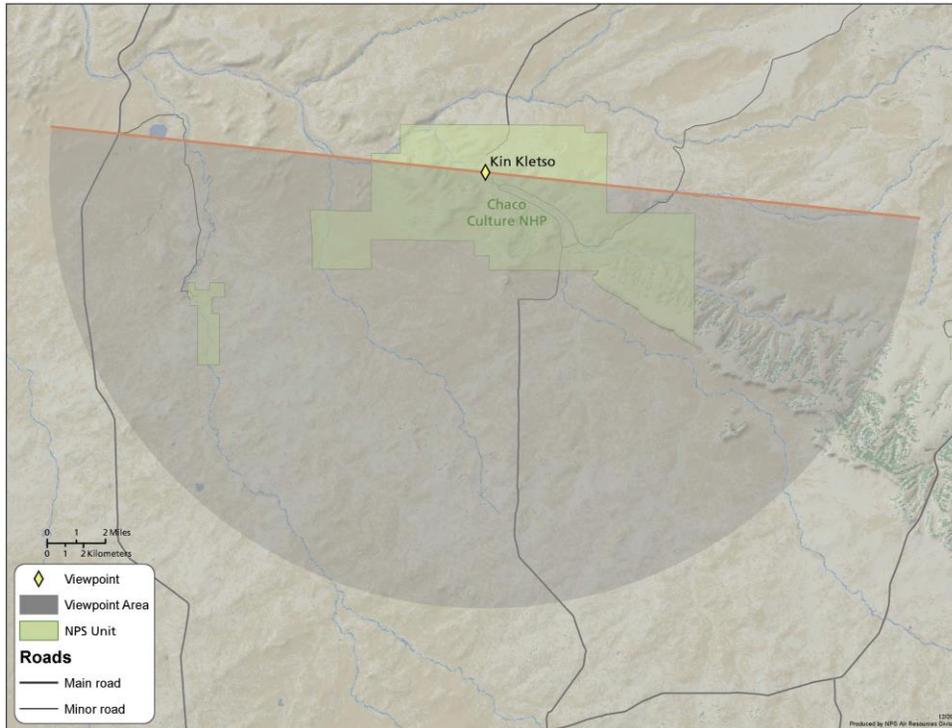


Figure 9. View area of Kin Kletso

Pueblo Bonito Overlook and Kin Kletso both received importance ratings of 2. Pueblo Bonito is well publicized and while there are no interpretive facilities at the viewpoint, the location provides one of the iconic views of “downtown” Chaco (Figure 10). Kin Kletso is not as well publicized but does have interpretive panels. Both viewpoints have a similar level of visitation because visitors to the Pueblo Bonito overlook and Pueblo Alto pass through the site. Overall visitation at the viewpoints is lower than some locations within Chaco Canyon.



Figure 10. View from Pueblo Bonito Overlook

In the vicinity of the Pueblo Bonito and Kin Kletso overlooks is the Pueblo Alto (#16) viewpoint (Figure 11). The location of Pueblo Alto atop this mesa offered expansive views of the landscape that allowed visual connection to the road network centered on Chaco Canyon (Figure 12). Very few contrasting elements are visible in any direction of the expansive 360 degree view from Pueblo Alto, and it received a scenic quality rating of A. Visitors to Pueblo Alto can experience views that are mostly unchanged since the time of the Chacoan people's presence at the site. Under the right lighting conditions, remnants of the ancient Chaco road network can occasionally be seen, with the South road visible through South Gap and the North Road extending from Alto Mesa to the north – though this is not a common occurrence.

Pueblo Alto's importance rating was 2 because it is a location that is well publicized including promotion at the visitor center and several brochures that cite its important location along the Chaco road network and chronicle some of the extensive excavation at the site that has occurred over the years. Pueblo Alto offers vast open views of the greater Chaco landscape and most visitors considered sensitive to changes in the view because they could diminish the sense of experiencing the historic setting.

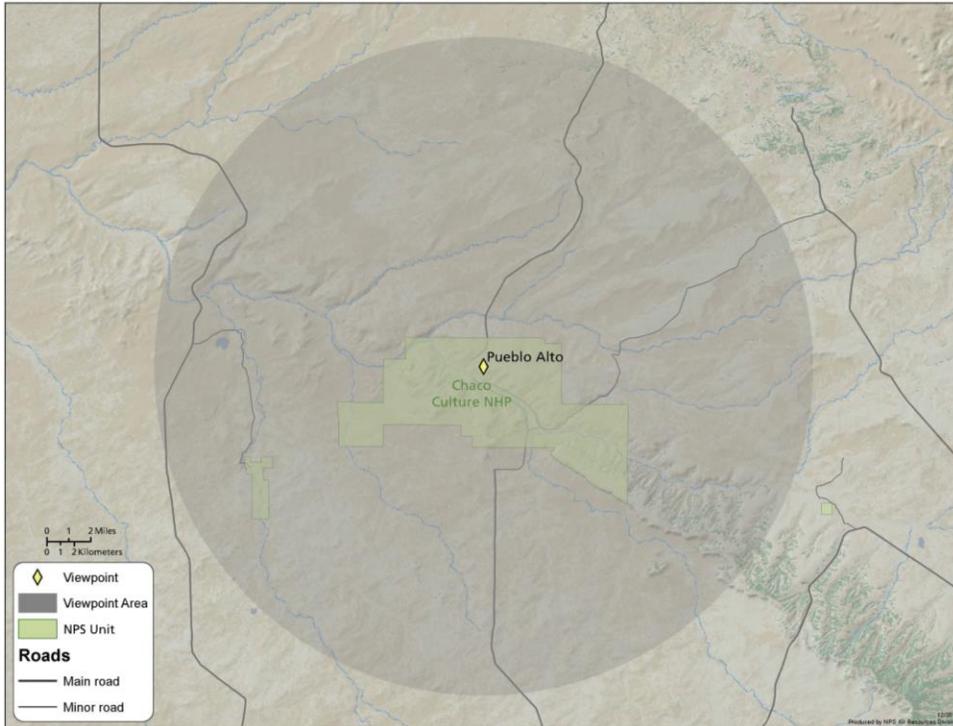


Figure 11. View are of Pueblo Alto



Figure 12. View from Pueblo Alto toward South Gap

West of Pueblo Alto, Peñasco Blanco sits atop a mesa at the end of Chaco Canyon (Figure 13). Views from Peñasco Blanco are also expansive and mostly undisturbed, but the visitor is drawn to viewpoints that offer distinct viewing experiences because of the scale and height of the remaining archeological site. Viewpoint #7 is located at the north end of the site and offers views to the north and east, including an extent up Chaco Canyon. Viewpoint #8 is located near the southern end of the site through an opening in the structure that seems to naturally invite visitors to go through it. Both views feature extensive mesa landforms and Chaco/Escavada Wash is a prominent feature in the view from viewpoint #8 because the view extends several miles down the drainage corridor. Both views received a scenic quality rating of A, with few intrusions and exhibiting a high degree of integrity, and bold landforms adding interest. Similar to Pueblo Alto, both views offer visitors the experience of viewing a landscape that is mostly unchanged since the time of the Chacoan people's presence at the site.

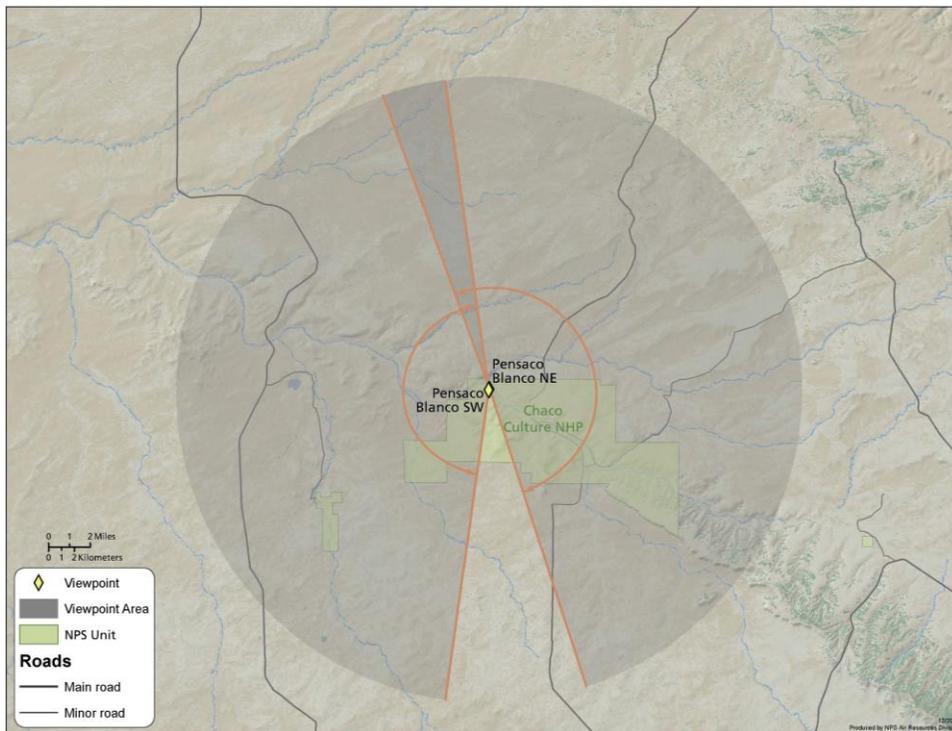


Figure 13. View area for Peñasco Blanco

The importance rating for both views from Peñasco Blanco was 2. Publicity is somewhat similar to Pueblo Alto, especially the “Supernova’ rock art that is along the trail to the site. There are no interpretive facilities at Peñasco Blanco but there is a trail/interpretive guide available at the visitor center. Overall visitation somewhat lower than Pueblo Alto and some of the canyon sites because of the long trail access but visitors would be considered sensitive to potential changes in the views because of the backcountry experience in accessing the site and the undisturbed condition on the current views.

Tsin Kletzin (#9) is located across Chaco Canyon from Pueblo Alto on South Mesa (Figure 14). The view from this location received a scenic quality rating of A because it is essentially pristine with expansive views to the north including distant mountain ranges and Pueblo Alto within the park. Topography limits views to the south and into Chaco Canyon. The importance rating at Tsin Kletzin was 3 because it is not very well publicized and generally receives a lower level of visitation as compared to the most popular sites in the park. There are no interpretive facilities at the site but there is a trail guide available.

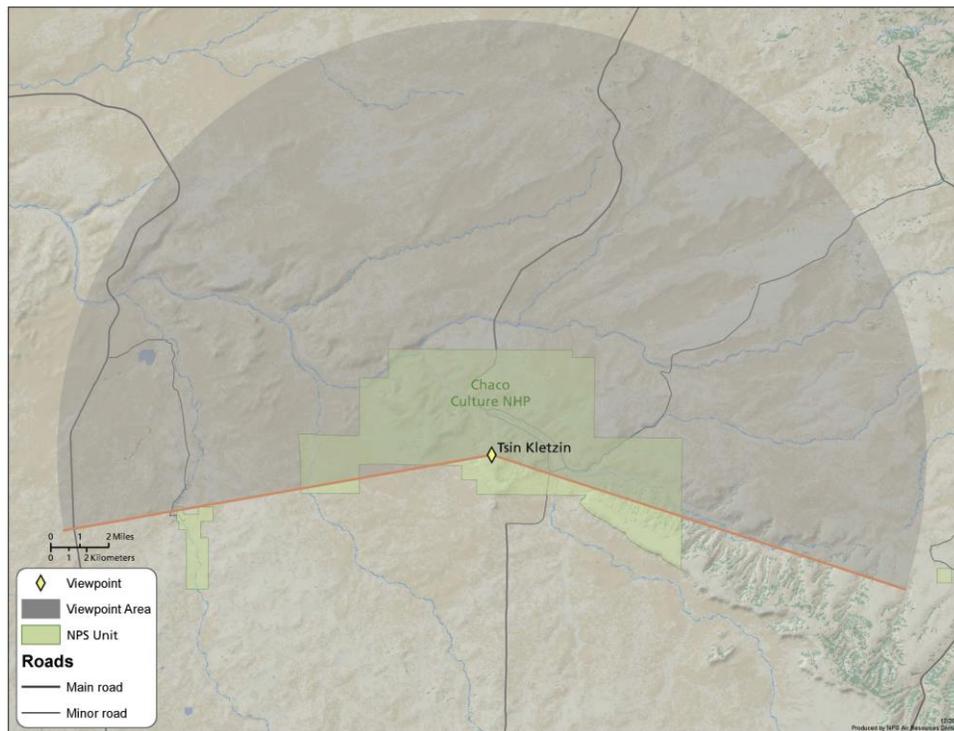


Figure 14. View are of Tsin Kletzin

At the opposite end of Chaco Canyon near the east edge of the park, atop Chacra Mesa, the Shabik'eshsee viewpoint (#12) has expansive views up and down the east end of Chaco Canyon (Figures 15, 16). The only visible intrusion is the park road and even that is not a notable distraction. Even though the landforms are not quite as bold in this area of the canyon, the view received a scenic quality rating of A because the landscape is intact and has a high degree of visual harmony. Though open, the site receives very limited visitation and received an importance rating of 4. The site offers the opportunity for visitors to see a landscape mostly unchanged since the time of the Chacoan presence. The site is not publicized and there are no interpretive facilities but visitors that do go to the site experience a mostly backcountry experience and would be sensitive to potential changes in the view from the site.

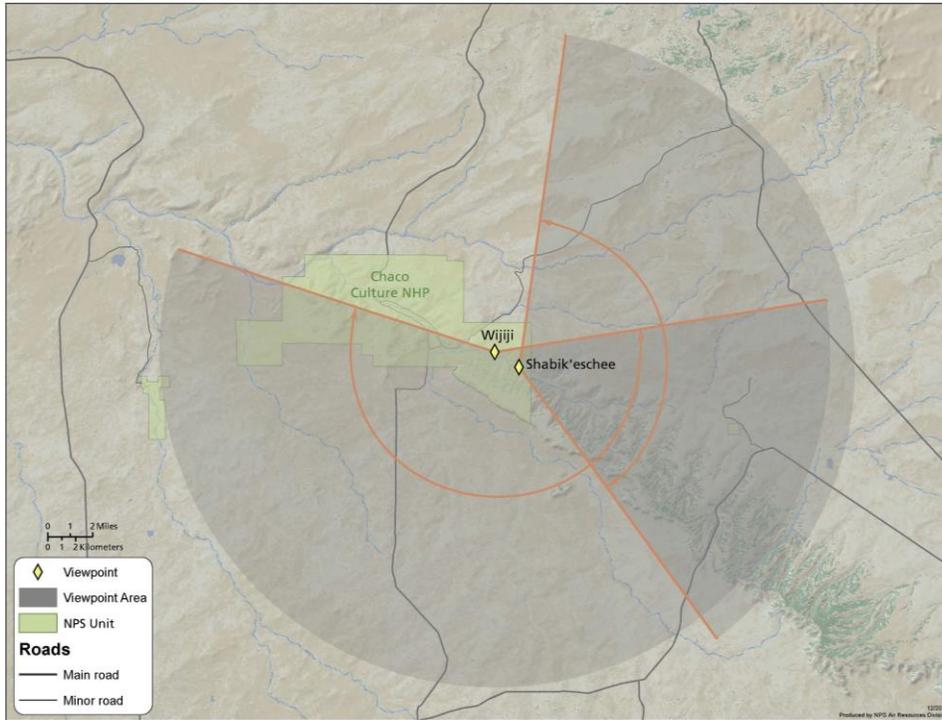


Figure 15. View areas of Shabik'eschee and Wijiji



Figure 16. View from Shabik'eschee

3.2.3. Canyon Viewpoints

Seven of the views evaluated were from viewpoints within Chaco Canyon or one of the side canyons. Unlike the mesa top viewpoints and to a certain extent the views from around the visitor center the locations within the canyon have somewhat enclosed views. These viewpoints lack the expansive views and visitor attention is drawn to the archeological sites at the viewpoint and the canyon landforms. Other archeological sites are visible from some locations giving a sense of how the Chaco community was connected in the canyon. Hungo Pavi (#13) (Figure 17), Casa Rinconada (#11) (Figure 17), Pueblo del Arroyo (#14) (Figures 18, 19), and Pueblo Bonito (#15), (Figure 18) are located in the main core of Chaco Canyon within the park and all received scenic quality ratings of A. The canyon landscape is relatively intact with park facilities being the primary elements that can be a distraction. Bold landforms and a variety of colors complement the archeological sites and create a sense of context for understanding how the Chacoan people lived in the canyon.

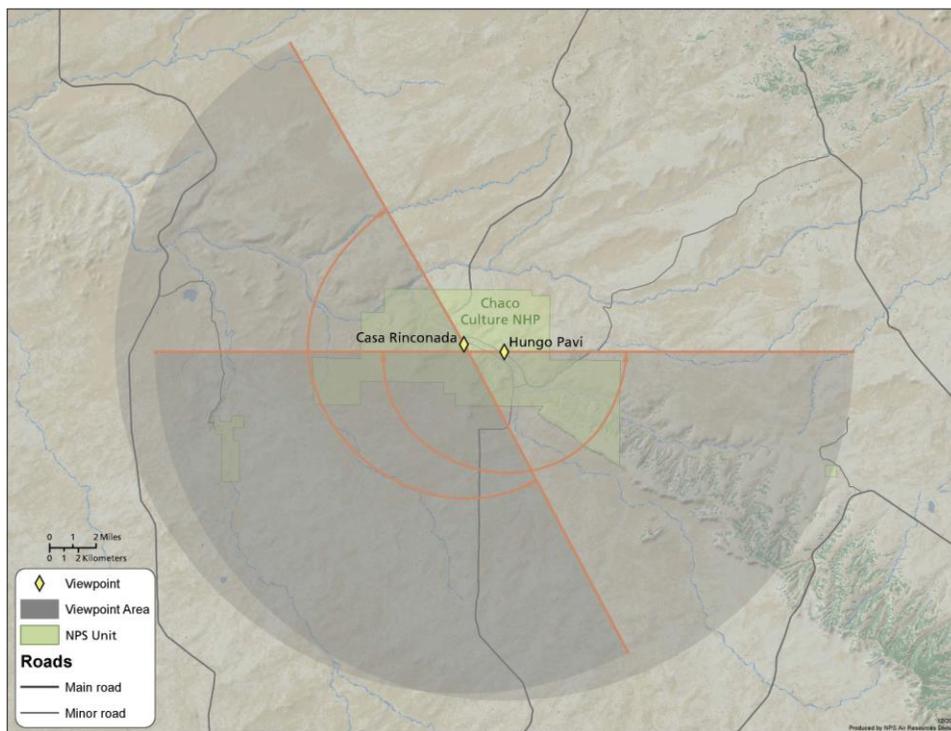


Figure 17. View areas of Casa Rinconada and Hungo Pavi

Being in the central part of the canyon within the park the views from all four locations also scored high in the importance ratings. The sites are central to the interpretive themes at Chaco and generally have high levels of visitation. Casa Rinconada and Pueblo Bonito received a 1 in the importance ratings because they have a slightly higher level of publicity and interpretive facilities. Hungo Pavi and Pueblo del Arroyo scored a 2 in the importance ratings.

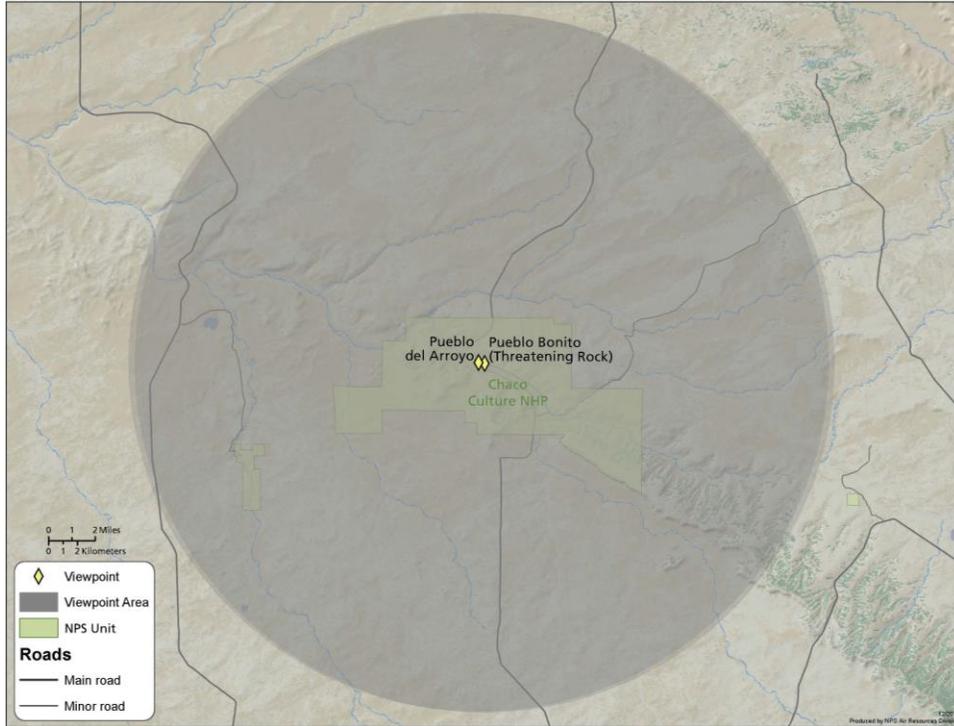


Figure 18. View areas of Pueblo del Arroyo and Pueblo Bonito



Figure 19. View from Pueblo del Arroyo

The Petroglyph Trail viewpoint is located west of the central canyon area along the trail to Penasco Blanco (Figure 20). While the landscape is intact it generally lacks some of the landforms and colors found in the central area of the canyon and the view received a scenic quality rating of *B*. View importance was rated a 3 with the viewpoint receiving a lower level of publicity and visitation than the sites in the core area of the park, but the backcountry experience currently enjoyed along the trail would make them sensitive to intrusions that would disturb the view.

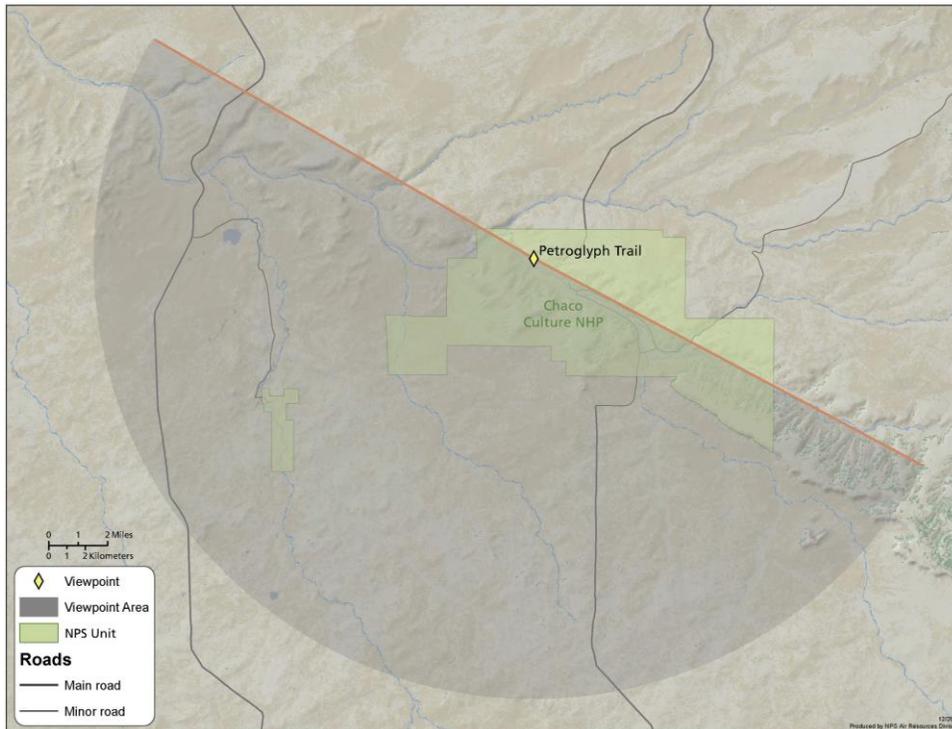


Figure 20. View area of Petroglyph Trail

Wijiji (#22) is located in the eastern end of Chaco Canyon, near the Shabuk ‘eschee mesa-top site (Figure 16). Similar to Petroglyph Trail, it is located in an area of the canyon that is mostly undisturbed but lacks significant landforms and the scenic quality was rated *B*. The importance rating of 3 was the result of a low level of publicity and visitation, along with minimal interpretive facilities.

Gallo Campground (#4) is located in small canyon along the entry road approximately one half mile from Chaco Canyon (Figure 21). A viewpoint within the campground was selected as it is the only place to stay within the park and is heavily used during peak visitation. The location has an enclosed view in the canyon and significant landforms or other features are not visible. The scenic quality rating was *C* because while some level of development would be expected, some of the facilities are not in good condition and can diminish the visitor experience. The campground received an importance rating of 3 with a moderate level of visitation as compared to overall park visitation and a lower sensitivity of visitors to potential changes in the landscape because of the level of camp facilities at the site.

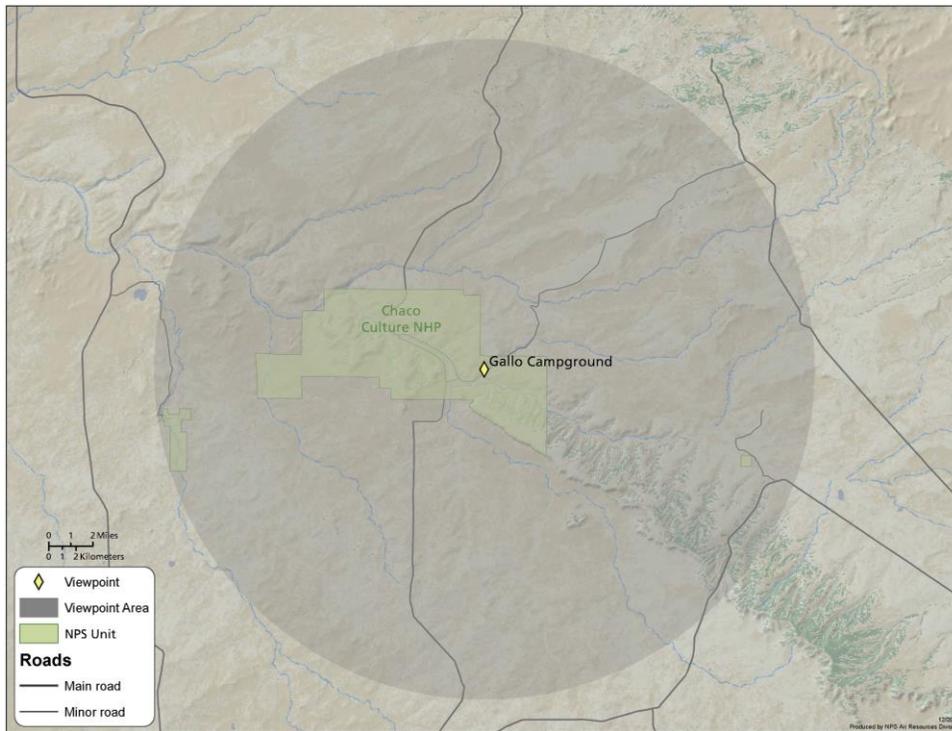


Figure 21. View area of Gallo Campground

3.2.4. Detached Units

Three archeological sites of Chaco National Historical Park are not located within the main park boundaries. Pueblo Pintado, Kin Bineola, Kin Ya'a are located on NPS parcels ranging from approximately 3 to 23 miles from the park. Though not technically a detached unit, Kin Klizhin (#18) (Figure 24) is one of the few archeological sites within the main Chaco NHP boundary that is not located in or near Chaco canyon. It also cannot be accessed from the main park roads and therefore is included this discussion. Viewpoints were selected at each of the detached sites to inventory the landscape setting, as each is surrounded by lands owned or managed by other agencies.

Kin Bineola (#19) is approximately three and a half miles west of the west boundary of the park and is within the same general landscape as Kin Klizhin (Figure 22). Kin Bineola offers a 360 degree panoramic view with landforms to the north that partially enclose the view. The landscape displays a high level of integrity and visual harmony and received a scenic quality rating of A. The few inconsistent elements around the site do not detract from the visual experience and similar to several other viewpoints, allows viewers to experience a landscape that is mostly unchanged since the Chacoan presence.

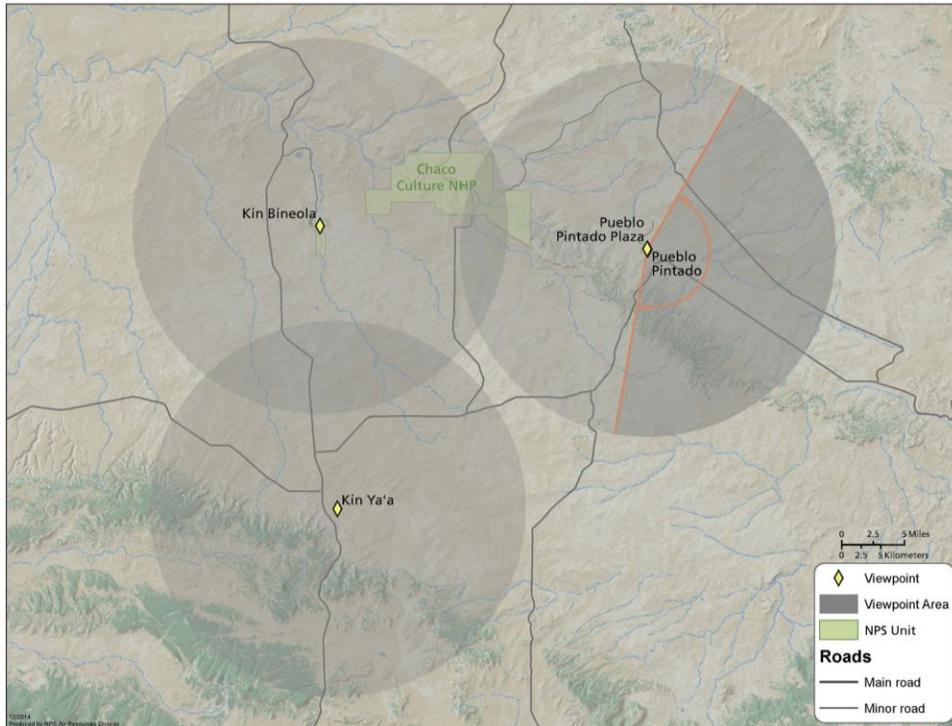


Figure 22. View areas of detached units

Kin Bineola archeological site is currently closed to visitors. The viewpoint does have some level of visitor and interpretive facilities with a parking area and interpretive panel. Visitors cannot access these facilities due to a road closure. The view received an importance rating of 3. The viewed landscape from the site is an important part of the park’s interpretive themes. Increased visitation in the future, if the site was reopened, may increase the importance of the viewpoint.

Kin Ya’a (#26) is approximately 23 miles south of the park (Figure 22). The landscape around Kin Ya’a has fewer landforms and features that add interest to the visual experience and it is also less intact. The community of Crownpoint is visible to the west and distracts from the visual setting for the site resulting a scenic quality rating of B. Views to the north and east are generally free from inconsistent elements.

Kin Ya’a is also closed to public visitation. There are no visitor or interpretive facilities at the viewpoint and the importance rating was 4, though similar to Kin Bineola it could be rated higher with increased visitation if opened to the public.

Pueblo Pintado (#17 and #25) is located approximately 10 miles east of the park and two viewpoints were selected based on the overall visitor experience (Figures 22, 23). The first (#17) is located at the interpretive panel for the site. From this location the archeological site is a primary focal point and the landscape within the view displays a high level of integrity. As with Kin Ya’a, the landscape lacks some features that add interest but the few minor inconsistent elements do not detract from the



Figure 23. View from Pueblo Pintado

visual experience. The inventory resulted in a quality rating of A from this viewpoint. The second viewpoint (#25) is located in the plaza of Pueblo Pintado. From this location the structure is still a strong focal point but the visible elements of a small community introduce some inconsistent elements that can be a distraction. The scenic quality rating of B still indicates a high level of overall scenic quality and additional contrasting elements in the landscape could affect the visitor experience.

Pueblo Pintado's importance rating was 3 for both views at the site. Though the site is highly publicized and promoted by the front desk at the visitor center it generally has a low level of visitation compared to sites inside the park. Visitor and interpretive facilities include a well maintained access road, parking area, signage and brochures.

At Kin Klizhin (#18) the view from the ridge above the Kin Klizhin valley offers expansive views, though somewhat less distant and enclosed in the direction of West Mesa (Figure 24). The view is mostly undisturbed and received a scenic quality rating of A. The archeological site and even several ranching structures visible fit well into the landscape and the few inconsistent elements of the parking lot and signage do not substantially detract from the visual experience.

Kin Klizhin is on the park map but receives little mention otherwise in park or outside media and the importance rating at Kin Klizhin was 3. The site does have a small parking area and interpretive panel but typically receives little visitation compared to most other sites within the park. The visitors

that do venture to the site would be sensitive to changes in the visual setting because the undisturbed setting is an important part of experiencing the site in the context of the Chaco landscape.

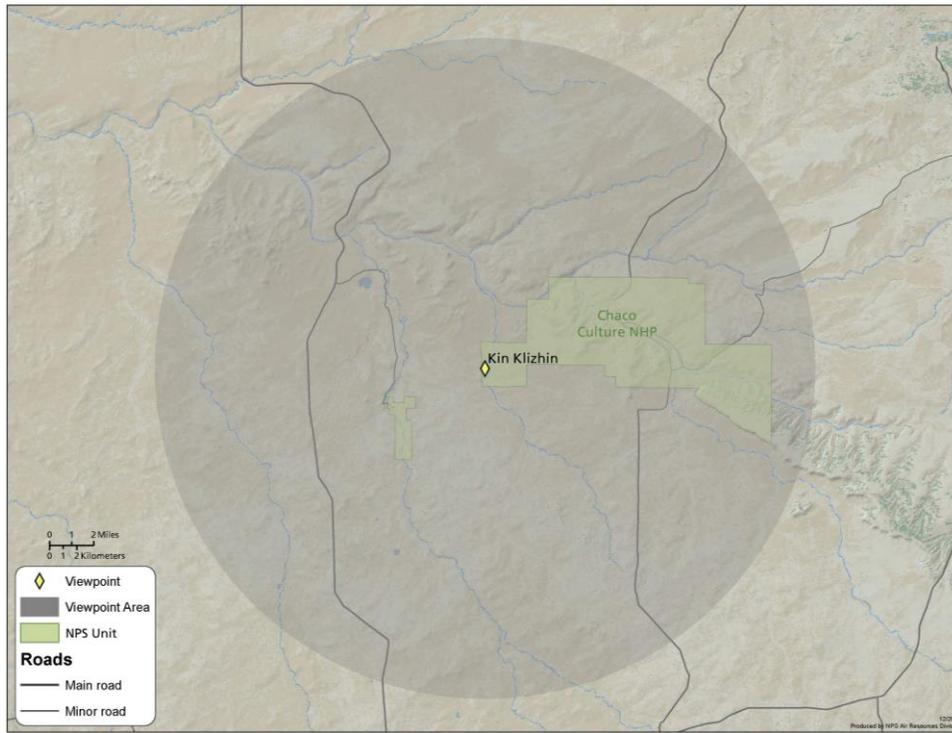


Figure 24. View area of Kin Klizhin

3.3. Scenic Inventory Values

The scenic inventory values (SIVs) at CHCU, derived from the combination of scenic quality and view importance ratings, ranged from moderate to very high, with only three views being rated as moderate. The moderate rated views generally had diminished scenic quality because of visual intrusions such as park or community development and also had lower importance values because of visitor use or facilities or reduced importance of the view to the visitor experience at that location (i.e. the scenic quality at the campground is not great but it is also not a critical reason for visitors to be at the park). Views with SIVs of very high included those with distant views beyond the park such as Pueblo Alto and Peñasco Blanco and views that mostly focused internally such as at Pueblo del Arroyo.

4. Conclusion

Chaco Culture National Historical Park offers visitors an opportunity to experience its many archeological sites in a setting that allows them to gain a sense of the Chaco connection to the landscape. The park inventoried the views from 26 locations that offered views within and beyond the park boundary. The viewpoints selected focused on the important archeological sites that visitors can typically access, including three sites that are part of the park but detached from the main unit.

Most views received a scenic quality rating of *A*, and only one – Gallo Campground – had a rating of *C*. Most views except those in the vicinity of the visitor center, campground or park entrances had very few visual intrusions. The views, especially viewing out from the major archeological sites retain a sense of the historic context of the landscape and the important visual connection of the sites in the landscape. While importance ratings ranged from 1 to 4, only two views – Pueblo Bonito at Threatening Rock and Casa Rinconada received the highest rating of 1. Most views were considered important to the interpretive themes at Chaco and lower ratings typically resulted from fewer visitors or facilities. However, coupled with the high scenic quality of the mostly intact landscape the resulting high scenic inventory values indicate the value of the views to the visitor experience.

5. Literature Cited

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Appendix A: Scenic Quality and View Importance Rating Methods

Scenic Quality

Assessing scenic quality involves field-based assessments of: Landscape Character Integrity, Vividness and Visual Harmony.

Each component is assessed in the field while viewing the landscape from the viewpoint, and the assessments requires that the group evaluate three factors for each component. All factors are equally weighted.

Landscape Character Integrity

Scenic integrity indicates the degree of intactness and wholeness of the landscape character identified in the landscape description section. The highest scenic integrity ratings are given to those landscapes which have little or no deviation from the character valued for its aesthetic appeal.

The rating process assumes that in order to have the highest degree of integrity, i.e. a high quality example of the identified landscape character the view must:

- Have most or all of the key elements of landscape character present;
- Have elements that are of high quality and in the appropriate condition for the landscape character, i.e. well built, well cared for, or, for historic/rustic landscapes, appropriately worn/aged; and
- Be relatively free of elements that are inconsistent with the landscape character.

Vividness

Vividness is the degree to which landscape elements are distinctive or striking enough to make a view memorable. The rating assumes that to have a high degree of vividness, the view must:

- Contain one or more dominant visual features or focal points;
- Contain striking forms and/or lines; and
- Contain striking colors, textures, or visible motion.

Visual Harmony

Visual harmony is the extent to which there is a pleasing array of visual elements in a landscape, usually as a result of a sense of visual order, compatibility, and completeness between and among the land forms, water forms, vegetation, or built elements visible in the landscape. The approach assumes that a high degree of visual harmony is achieved when:

- There is a clearly recognizable structure, pattern, or order to the spatial relationships of the landscape elements;
- The landscape elements display pleasing scale relationships; and
- The landscape displays pleasing color relationships.

Scenic quality ratings fall into five classes from A to E. Class A views have the highest scenic quality and Class E the lowest.

Importance Values

The view importance rating identifies NPS and visitor values for the viewpoint, the viewed landscape and the viewers. The view importance rating is an office-based exercise. Each component is assessed by a team of NPS staff. In the same manner as Scenic Quality, the process requires that the group evaluate three factors for each component and all factors are equally weighted.

Viewpoint Importance

Viewpoint importance assesses the extent to which the viewpoint is publicized and managed for visitors. The rating system assumes that to have the highest importance rating the viewpoint must:

- Be extensively publicized, especially for its scenic views, in NPS or external communications and media (e.g. hiking guides, web sites, movies).
- Have facilities that have been added or are planned for the viewpoint area to enhance the visitor experience and;
- Have a high level of interpretive services that contribute to the visitors' enjoyment of scenic, historical, cultural scientific or other NPS values of the unit.

Viewed Landscape Importance

Viewed landscape importance assesses the extent to which the elements in the viewed landscape are publicized and used for interpretation. The assessment also evaluates how important special designations such as Wilderness or historic sites are within the view. The viewed rating system assumes that to have the highest level of importance the viewed landscape must:

- Be extensively publicized, especially for its scenic views, in NPS or in external communications or media (e.g. hiking guides, web sites).
- Consist of all or mostly specially designated areas, or nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks (e.g. wilderness areas, cultural landscapes).
- Strongly illustrate the NPS unit's scenic character or important interpretive themes and/or be connected to the unit's goal for visitor experience

Viewer Concern

The evaluation of viewer concern relies primarily on the knowledge and professional judgment of NPS staff, and the rating system assumes that to have the highest level of viewer concern:

- The viewpoint must have a high level of visitation in relation to other viewpoints in the park;
- Viewers generally spend an extended period of time at the viewpoint; and
- Most visitors would be unusually sensitive to potential changes in a view because they are seeking views of natural character or historic significance.

View importance ratings fall into five classes from 1 to 5. Class 1 views have the highest view importance and Class 5 the lowest.

Appendix B: Viewpoint Panoramas



1. VC Entry; View Direction: South East; Approximate Width of View: 135 degrees



2. Una Vida Greathouse; View Direction: South; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



3. Campground Trail; View Direction: South; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



4. Gallo Campground; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



5. Verizon Hill; View Direction: South; Approximate Width of View: 90 degrees



6. View Point: Fajada Overlook; View Direction: South West; Approximate Width of View: 90 degrees



7. *Penasco Blanco NE;* *View Direction: North East;* *Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees*



8. *Penasco Blanco SW;* *View Direction: South West;* *Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees*



9. *Tsin Kletzin;* *View Direction: North;* *Approximate Width of View: 225 degrees*



10. South Gap; View Direction: South West; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



11. Casa Rinconada; View Direction: North; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



12. Shabik'eschee; View Direction: East; Approximate Width of View: 135 degrees



13. Hongo Pavi; View Direction: South East; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



14. Pueblo Bonito Threatening Rock; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



15. Pueblo del Arroyo; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



16. Pueblo Alto; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



17. Pueblo Pintado; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



18. Kin Klizhin; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



19. Kin Bineola; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



20. South Entrance; View Direction: North East; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



21. Petroglyph Trail; View Direction: North; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



22. Wijiji; View Direction: South; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



Pueblo Bonito Overlook; View Direction: North; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



24. Kin Kletso; View Direction: South; Approximate Width of View: 180 degrees



25. Pueblo Pintado Plaza; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees



26. Kin Ya'a; View Direction: N/A; Approximate Width of View: 360 degrees

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