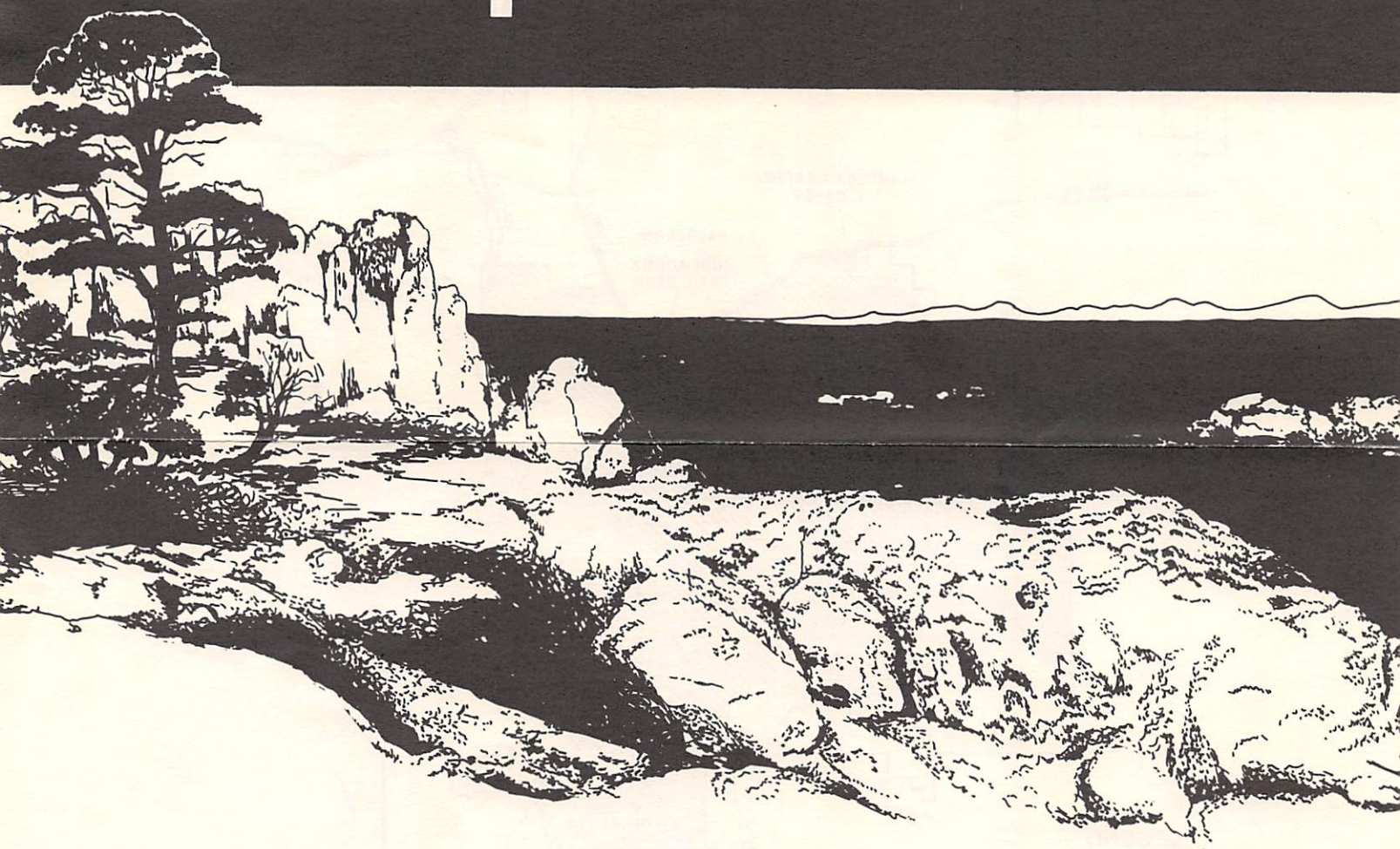


El Malpais

National Monument
National Conservation Area
U.S. Department of the Interior



The term "El Malpais," Spanish for "Badlands," is often applied to lava flows. Perhaps the name invokes images of emptiness and desolation, but this area is truly abundant with beauty and life and awaits your exploration.

Over the past 3 million years volcanoes erupted and gaseous explosions, rivers of molten rock, and flying cinders covered the area. It happened again and again over the centuries, producing this spectacular lava-filled valley of 115,000 acres. American Indians settled in the area, building pueblos nearby. They may have been here during the last eruptions, for Indian legends tell of rivers of "fire rock."

Administration

El Malpais National Monument and National Conservation Area were established in 1987 to preserve these geological and archeological resources for visitors and for study. The monument is administered by the National Park Service and the conservation area by the Bureau of Land Management, creating a joint venture by agencies within the Department of the Interior.

Management is slightly different in the two areas. In the monument, cattle grazing continues until December 31, 1997. The land will then be kept as near natural as possible. In the conservation area, compatible multiple uses, including hunting, trapping, and cattle grazing, will continue.

American Indian access for traditional cultural and religious purposes will continue.

Preservation

The people of the United States, through Congress, set aside this special area so our children and our children's children can enjoy it as we do. The BLM and NPS can't do it alone. We need your help. If you see someone removing objects, or defacing features or facilities, notify the nearest park ranger or law enforcement agency.

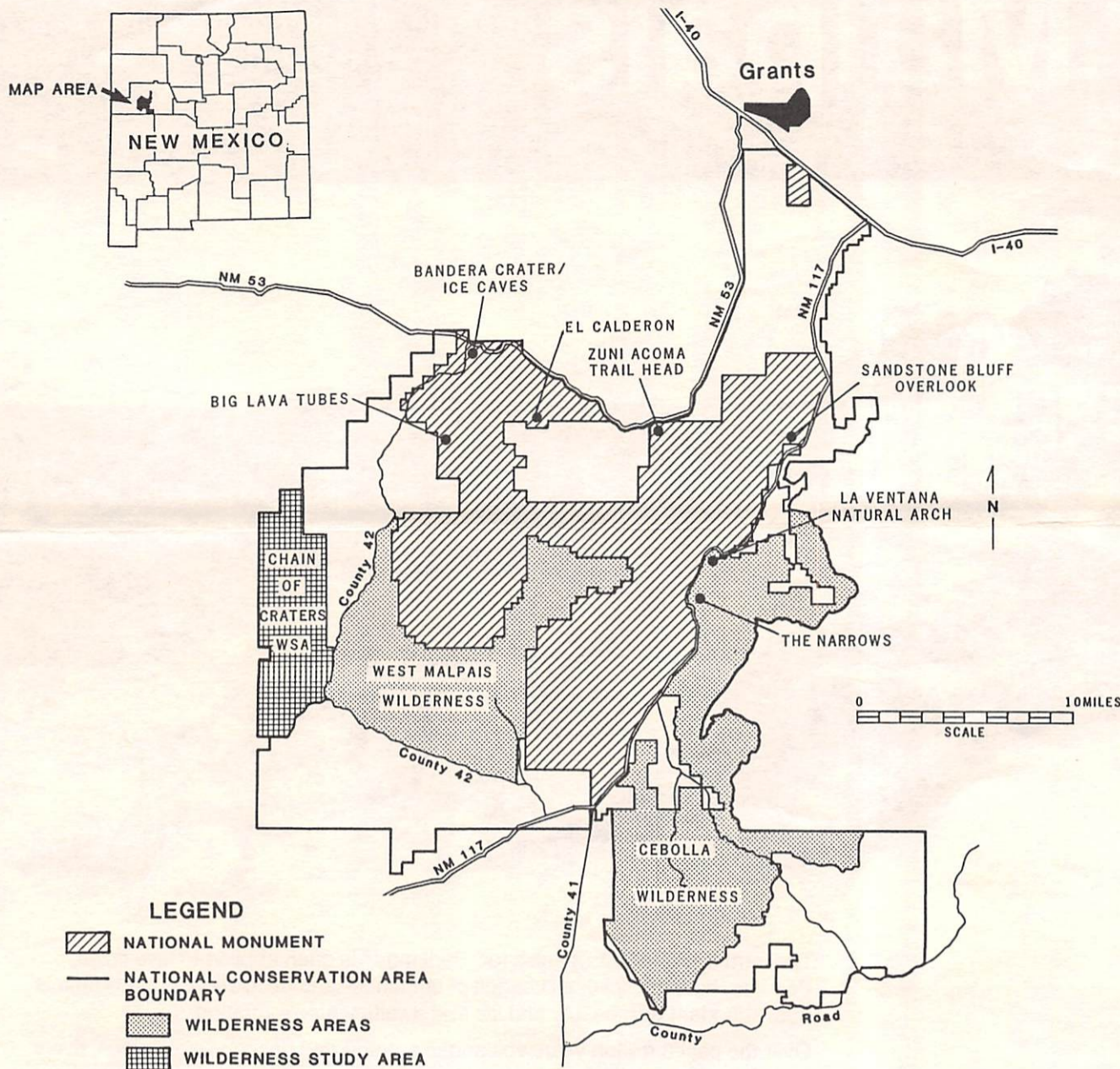
This is especially true of archeological features. To learn all we can about the earliest inhabitants, an artifact must not only be left, it must be left where it was found. Location is very important to archeological research. The penalties for collecting or disturbing these resources, which belong to all Americans, include fines of up to \$10,000 and/or two years in jail for first offenses.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

El Malpais Information Center
620 E. Santa Fe Street
Grants, NM 87020
Telephone (505) 285-5406

EL MALPAIS



SITES ALONG STATE ROAD 117

Sandstone Bluffs Overlook

An easy drive leads to a ridge of sandstone offering excellent views of the El Malpais lava flows and the surrounding countryside. Ten miles south of I-40. (NPS)

La Ventana Natural Arch

Eroded from sandstone deposited during the time of the dinosaurs, this spectacular natural arch is the largest accessible arch in New Mexico. Seventeen miles south of I-40. (BLM)

Cebolla Wilderness

Sixty-two thousand acres of outstanding forested rimrock country. East of SR 117. Mechanized access is prohibited. (BLM)

The Narrows

State Road 117 passes through a narrow corridor created when lava flowed near the base of 500-foot sandstone cliffs. (BLM) McCarty's Lava Flow in this area contains intriguing lava formations and is well worth the effort to explore. (NPS) A picnic area is located at the south end of the narrows. Eighteen miles south of I-40.

SITES ALONG STATE ROAD 53

Zuni-Acoma Trail

This Pueblo Indian trade route across the malpais connecting the pueblos of Zuni and Acoma was originally an ancient Anasazi trail. A printed trail guide is available for this 7 1/2 mile hike (one-way), which crosses 4 of the 5 major lava flows in the area. Eighteen miles south of I-40. (NPS)

El Calderon

This forested area offers year-round exploration opportunities, including: Junction Cave, Twin Craters Lava Flow, Double Sinks, El Calderon cinder cone, sandstone formations, and a bat cave. For your health and safety, do not enter the bat cave or disturb the bats. Twenty miles south of I-40. (NPS)

Bandera Crater/Ice Cave

Imagine the eruption of this majestic cinder cone and visualize how the cone was formed. Nearby, a lava tube contains ice year round. A commercial operation with a fee, this area will be added to the national monument in the future. Twenty-five miles south of I-40.

SITES ALONG COUNTY ROAD 42

Big Lava Tubes

As the crust of fresh lava cools and hardens, sometimes the still-hot inner lava will flow out from under it, forming lava "tubes." These tubes can be huge. This one, counting collapsed sections, is 17 miles long! A cairn trail leads to two caves: Big Skylight and Four Window. High-clearance vehicle required. Ten miles south and east of SR 53. (NPS)

Chain of Crater

Lava found a weak area in the Earth's crust, creating a line of 30 cinder cones. This wilderness study area (WSA) reflects a remarkable display of the power of nature and contains excellent panoramas of the National Conservation Area and National Monument. West of County Road 42. (BLM)

West Malpais Wilderness

This wilderness area includes "Hole in the Wall," a large ponderosa pine parkland surrounded by lava. Mechanized access is prohibited. Forty thousand acres, east of County Road 42. (BLM)

ENJOYING THE AREA

Plans are being made for facilities to better welcome visitors, but the great lava flow itself will remain "el malpais."

Lava is rough! Hiking can be strenuous, and a fall can be serious. It is easy to get lost. Use extreme care while exploring. Check at El Malpais Information Center for information and

backcountry permits before traveling into this natural area.

High-clearance vehicles are advisable off State Roads 53 and 117. Vehicles are restricted to existing, designated roads, except in wilderness areas where vehicles and mechanized equipment are prohibited.