



Foundation Document Overview

Hovenweep National Monument

Colorado, Utah



Contact Information

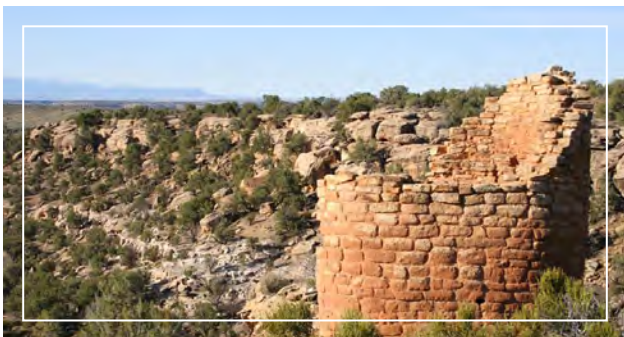
For more information about the *Hovenweep National Monument Foundation Document*, contact: hove_superintendent@nps.gov or (970) 562-4282 or write to: Superintendent, Hovenweep National Monument, McElmo Rte., Cortez, CO 80321

Purpose



The purpose of HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT is to...

- *Protect extraordinary examples of prehistoric architecture and the setting in which they are located.*
- *Protect other features of geological, historical, and scientific interest.*
- *Provide opportunities for visitor appreciation and education that leave monument resources unimpaired.*



Significance

Significance statements express why Hovenweep National Monument's resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park contains a high concentration of the best-preserved freestanding towers and related structures in the American Southwest. Located in several canyon head settlements, these remains are excellent representations of ancestral Pueblo communities existing on the Great Sage Plain during the late Pueblo III period.
- Hovenweep lies in an area that is significant to many cultural groups including Pueblo, Ute, Navajo, and Anglo communities.
- Hovenweep's well-preserved archeological sites comprise cultural landscapes that offer exceptional opportunities for research into ancestral Pueblo community life, including the final decades of occupation and depopulation of the region.
- The park's extensive materials collection provides important evidence of the ancestral Pueblo culture as well as insights into the ways the people adapted to this demanding environment.
- The park represents an intact remnant of the Great Sage Plain ecosystem. This harsh desert environment presents survival challenges for both human inhabitants and the natural flora and fauna. Plant and animal species characteristic of this ecosystem are found in most units of Hovenweep.
- Hovenweep's perceived remoteness and uninterrupted horizons lend a sense of discovery to visitors' experiences. The shallow canyons, riparian systems, spring alcoves, and structural remains enable visitors to more easily envision the life of ancestral Pueblo communities and their relationship to the natural environment.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Cultural resources**

- » tower structures
- » archeological sites
- » kivas
- » lithic scatters
- » museum collections

- **Cultural landscapes**

- » canyon head communities
- » village sites

- **Natural setting**

- » canyons
- » plateaus
- » plains
- » riparian systems – springs and seeps
- » native plant and animal species
- » views and vistas from within the park boundary
- » night skies
- » natural soundscapes



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park— they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from — and should reflect — park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Oral traditions of the modern day Pueblo people say that Hovenweep is their ancestral village and a stepping-stone in their journey to the sacred center place. The park’s preserved cultural and natural landscape gives physical form to oral traditions of living Pueblo peoples’ creation and migration stories. Since the time of migration, the Hovenweep area has subsequently been a home place to many other people including Utes, Navajos, and eventually Anglo settlers.
- Standing architecture still present at Hovenweep provides tangible remains of a once-vibrant community. From these remains, we glimpse ancestral Pueblo community life, traditions, and challenges. Reflections on this ancient culture in this undisturbed setting provide an opportunity for modern visitors to relate their lives to those of earlier inhabitants.
- Ancestral Pueblo society at Hovenweep flourished. Evidence of their architectural and intellectual achievements is seen in the buildings, rock art, and celestial markers that remain today. These elements indicate a culture that was not just surviving but thriving.
- The Great Sage Plain supports the same wildlife and resources today that past communities relied upon for shelter, food, and clothing. Plants, animals, and people have adapted and thrived on these mesa tops, shallow canyons, riparian systems, and spring alcoves for thousands of years.
- The human story at Hovenweep has a timeless quality that provokes questions about motivations and worldviews of the ancestral Pueblo people. We must preserve and study these clues to the past to better understand who they were and how they lived.

Description

Hovenweep National Monument (Hovenweep) consists of six detached units in southeastern Utah and southwestern Colorado that protect 13th century pueblo standing towers and villages at canyon head locations. The units range in size from 14 to 400 acres; one unit is surrounded by the Navajo Nation. The towers of Hovenweep were built by ancestral Puebloans, a sedentary farming culture that occupied the Four Corners area from about A.D. 500 to A.D. 1300. Similarities in architecture, masonry, and pottery styles indicate that the inhabitants of Hovenweep were closely associated with groups living at Mesa Verde and other nearby sites.

Most of the structures at Hovenweep were built between A.D. 1200 and A.D. 1300. There is a considerable variety of shapes and sizes, including square and circular towers, D-shaped dwellings, and many kivas (Puebloan ceremonial structures, usually circular). Some structures built on irregular boulders remain standing after more than 700 years.

The Hovenweep structures are the best-preserved, best-protected, and most visually striking and accessible examples of 13th century pueblo architecture and community locations within the San Juan River basin. The Goodman Point unit was the first archeological site set aside by the federal government in 1889 and is one of the largest 13th century ancestral pueblo villages in the San Juan River basin. The monument also contains examples of ancient astronomical calendars that mark important seasonal events using architecture, rock art, and sunlight.

