

A CELEBRATION OF THE RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL
MONUMENT

2013 COMPLIMENTARY PUBLICATION OF THE TAOS NEWS

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MONUMENTAL DESIGNATION A REASON TO CELEBRATE

Following President Obama's designation of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument in March, local residents, environmental activists and business and government leaders took time to celebrate.

Taos Mesa Brewing had a party and sent a batch of its Río Grande del Norte beer to the president. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich came to Taos to join the party, along with former Sen. Jeff

Bingaman. Some area residents, like Taos Pueblo War Chief Samuel Gomez and Questa Mayor Esther García were in the Oval Office when the president signed the historic proclamation, which we will hopefully someday see as a watershed moment for conservation in Northern New Mexico.

While the party has died down somewhat since the spring, *The Taos News* felt the need to offer this commemorative special publication marking the historic event. Hopefully, it will not be the last of its kind. Other local areas, such as the proposed Columbine-Hondo Wilderness Area and Mount San Antonio need and deserve equal protections. And climate change, along with outdated water compacts, has taken a toll on the amount of water we get in the wild and scenic portion of the Río Grande that is part of the national monument.

Surely, however, the Río Grande del Norte National Monument can serve as a springboard and provide momentum for the conservation battles that lie ahead in Northern New Mexico. The coalitions are already in place, with business leaders, politicians and local residents from all walks of life.

And when done in a way that protects centuries of traditional uses, as was the case with the national monument, there is no reason that everyone can't be a winner when the cause is conservation of our most treasured natural wilderness areas.

So let us hope that the Río Grande del Norte National Monument is not only the culmination of a long fight for protection of an important resource, but the beginning of a longer history of environmental stewardship in Northern New Mexico.

— Andy Jones, special sections editor



Chris Dahl-Bradine/taosaerialimages.com

The Río Grande gorge cuts through the Sunshine Valley north of Questa, near Ute Mountain.

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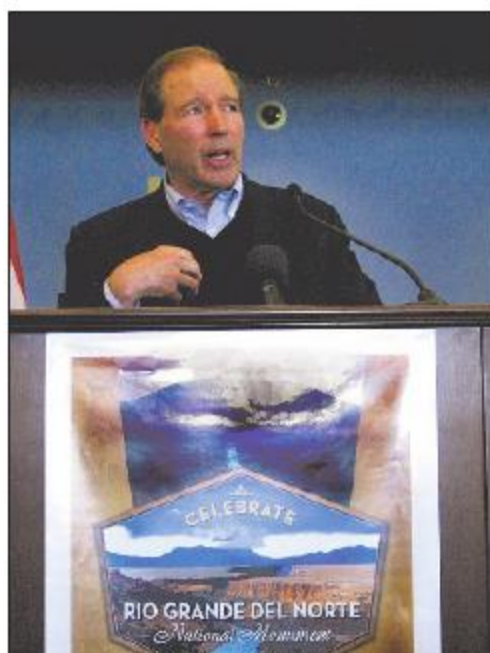
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THE RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE, NEW MEXICO'S TREASURE



U.S. Sen. Tom Udall speaks at an event commemorating the designation of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument.

On March 25 of this year, President Obama signed the Río Grande del Norte National Monument Proclamation. I was very pleased to celebrate the occasion at the Taos County Commission chambers.

As a permanently protected national monument, the Río Grande del Norte will support hundreds of jobs and will bring millions of tourism dollars to the area. The designation is a particular credit to former Sen. Jeff Bingaman and to the great coalition of local residents, businesses, tribes, environmentalists and community leaders who so tirelessly championed the cause.

My dad (Stewart Udall) wrote in his book, "The Quiet Crisis," that "each generation has its own rendezvous with the land ... we are all brief tenants on this planet. By choice, or by default, we will carve out a land legacy for our heirs." My dad taught me to value and respect the environment.

In New Mexico, we know the importance of this reverence for the land. It is the heart and soul of the Land of

Enchantment, and it is vital to the prosperity of our state. When we protect our natural treasures, we are investing in the future and also paying a debt to generations to come.

Sen. Bingaman began the effort in 2007 to permanently protect the Río Grande del Norte. It is one of his many legacies to the people of our state. I was proud to work with Sen. Bingaman, and later Sen. Heinrich and Congressman Luján to make this important goal a reality.

From the 800-foot-deep Río Grande Gorge to the top of Ute Mountain at over 10,000 feet, the Río Grande del Norte has some of the most varied and spectacular vistas on earth. Human beings have walked its trails since prehistoric times. We can all be proud that this remarkable place will remain a great wildlife habitat, and home to some of the best fishing and hunting in the American West. For recreational enjoyment, for conservation and the environment, and for economic growth, the Río Grande del Norte is a treasure for current and future generations.

U.S. Sen. Tom Udall

RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE: A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL NEW MEXICANS



U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich

In March, I stood proudly with former Sen. Jeff Bingaman, Taos Pueblo War Chief Samuel Gomez, and Questa Mayor Esther Garcia in the Oval Office as President Obama signed the proclamation designating the Río Grande del Norte a national monument. This was a historic moment for New Mexico and our entire country.

From the tops of Cerro de la Olla and Ute Mountain, to the depths of the Río Grande Gorge, the Río Grande del Norte is one of the most spectacular places on earth. Our state's newest national monument will continue to improve the quality of life for all who hunt, fish, and float there, for all who benefit from the tourism dollars it brings, and for all who pass on New Mexico's many outdoor traditions — both old and new — to their children and grandchildren in such a magnificent setting.

Conservation and growing the economy are inextricably linked. As a former outfitter guide, I know firsthand how important the Río Grande del Norte National Monument is for Taos County's local economy.

New Mexico's newest national monument will draw thousands of tourists from across the country and around the world, bringing millions of dollars in revenue to the region.

Local businesses are already reporting increased inquiries and bookings due to the designation. According to a recent economic study, the establishment of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument could lead to an increase of approximately \$15 million in regional economic activity and create more than 250 new jobs.

This historic monument designation would not have been possible without the tireless efforts and collaboration of our local communities, businesses, sportsmen, conservationists, tribes, land grant heirs, acequia parcientes, ranchers, elected officials, and many others who have dedicated years of hard work to protect the area.

I want to give particular thanks to Sen. Bingaman for championing this effort, to my friends and colleagues Sen. Tom Udall and Congressman Ben Ray Luján, to former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and to President Obama for recognizing just how special the Río Grande del Norte is.

Let us continue to revel in our state's natural beauty and heed the call of building a brighter future together for all New Mexicans.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich

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EVOLUTION OF A MONUMENT: THE MAKING OF THE RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE

BY J.R. LOGAN

In the early 1990s, conservation in Taos County was a polarizing issue. Environmental groups were locked in a pitched battle with Molycorp in Questa over contamination from mining activities. Meanwhile, the Taos chapter of a group called People for the West was exchanging barbs with environmentalists in a debate over the use of public lands for mining, logging, and oil and gas extraction.

With all the headbutting on sharply conflicting agendas, there was a lot of mistrust.

Amid this turmoil, then-congressman Bill Richardson appointed a citizens committee — from Hispano grazers and loggers, to Taos Pueblo tribal members, to Anglo rafters and artists — to figure out the best way to establish a conservation area to be known as the Río Grande del Norte. The goal was to come up with a plan to safeguard hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine public lands on the Taos Plateau without offending the rights of people who'd subsisted off the same land for centuries.

It wasn't the first time the upper Río Grande had been considered for preservation, but it was more audacious than earlier efforts.

In 1968, a 74-mile stretch of Río Grande Gorge was granted increased protections under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The act said certain rivers in the country should be left free-flowing to preserve their unique characteristics. While it protected the Río Grande Gorge from rim to rim, it left an enormous amount of adjoined land open to development.

Ron Gardiner, a land and water consultant who spent years surveying raptors and other wildlife in the area, says protecting what's special about the river meant preserving the ecosystem that extends well beyond the gorge walls. The savanna-like mesas are home to elk herds that number in the thousands, and species like bear and mountain lion roam the plateau from end to end. "A lot of people could look at that place and think it was nothing, but really it's a pretty diverse place," Gardiner says.

The committee appointed by Richardson was hoping to redefine what "conservation" meant to a community that was inextricably linked to the land.

"Together, we identified a lot of the issues and tried to find some common ground," says Mary Humphrey, one of the board's appointees. Members often disagreed on the details, but most had the same fundamental goal. "We wanted to protect and enshrine the unique heritage of Northern New Mexico," Humphrey says.

After a year of back-and-forth, the committee approved a list of 22 recommendations, such as continuing to allow cultural practices like firewood collection, and insisting that locals would have a say in how the area was managed.

Many of the recommendations were rewritten into a bill Richardson introduced to Congress in 1991. The bill died, in part because of the ongoing disputes between industry and environmentalists. For more than a decade, there was little discussion about a conservation area.

It wasn't until 2005, when the Bureau of Land Management completed its purchase of Ute Mountain that the idea was resurrected.

Ute Mountain is a 14,000-acre volcanic dome that sits at the edge of the Río Grande Gorge west of Costilla. Jim O'Donnell, who worked for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance at the time, says he was blown away by the mountain and by the surrounding landscape. He began urging the BLM to consider Ute Mountain for wilderness designation, and he found eager partners like Jorge Silva-Bañuelos, a staffer for Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., who joined the effort after a raft trip down the upper section of the river.

O'Donnell found notes from the citizen committee meetings, and with the help of others, began fanning out into the community to see whether the mood was right to revisit the conservation area idea. He says he found an audience that was at least willing to listen.

"All the stuff from the early '90s had really dried up, and people were really coming together on these things," O'Donnell says.

As part of the outreach, conservation proponents sought out members of the land grant community, who had real reservations about increased federal restrictions.

"When we first started this conversation, I was a little wary," says Esther García, an active member of the San Antonio del Río Grande Land Grant and the current mayor of Questa. "But after doing a lot of research and visiting with people, we realized this needed to get done in order to preserve this area for future generations."

Hispanos like García emphasized the importance of existing uses like grazing, wood gathering and herb collection. The delegation in Washington listened, and a



Courtesy Photo

Senator Tom Udall, right, shakes hands with river guide and activist Cisco Guevera during an event to mark the designation of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, in March.

"I THINK THE DESIGNATION HIGHLIGHTS THE BEAUTY OF THE AREA, THE CULTURAL VALUES OF THE AREA, AND THE NATURAL VALUES OF THE AREA."

FORMER U.S. SEN. JEFF BINGAMAN



Tina Larkin

Former U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman autographs a Río Grande del Norte National Monument celebration poster for The Land and Water Clinic's Ron Gardiner at a Río Grande del Norte National Monument victory party in March at Taos Mesa Brewing.

series of bills introduced between 2009 and 2013 all included language to protect those rights.

Each bill languished in a log-jammed Congress, but conservation area supporters continued to rally local support on the ground.

In light of the growing coalition, Sen. Bingaman says the idea of creating a national monument (which does not require an act of Congress) started to get serious consideration. Bingaman says he met several times with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to strategize how to get some designation in place, whether as a conservation area through legislation, or as a monument through a presidential proclamation.

On March 25, 2013, Pres. Barack Obama invoked his powers under the 1906 Antiquities Act and signed a presidential proclamation creating the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, with nearly all of the same protections that would have been afforded under a conservation area designation.

Bingaman, who retired from politics at the end of last year, says he's proud to have supported the ideas behind the Río Grande del Norte. "I think the designation highlights the beauty of the area, the cultural values of the area, and the natural values of the area," Bingaman says. "It's a very important public lands success for New Mexico."



Rick Romancito

Then (now former) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar listens to a crowd of supporters for the establishment of a Río Grande Del Norte National Monument at the Kachina Lodge in Taos last December.



Tina Larkin

Rafting is one of the most popular ways to explore the depths of the Río Grande del Norte.

MONUMENT PROVIDES WEALTH OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

BY CODY OLIVAS

The Río Grande Rift is an area where the earth has been pulled apart, leaving behind a gaping canyon hundreds of feet deep where the river continues to dig. Some believe that the rift is where our continent will eventually separate into two. Right now, however, it's a uniting force among outdoor recreationalists in pursuit of seclusion. The diversity of the landscape offers something for every outdoor athlete, from fishing and hiking to rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking and hunting. It's a vast area where much of the wild-life lives undisturbed. Birds thrive, and so do elk, bighorn sheep and an idea known as solitude.

Now that the Río Grande del Norte is a national monument, adventures in the area will continue on indefinitely.

"I think (the monument status) is going to preserve (the area) forever," Gearing Up bike shop co-owner Rey Deveaux said.

"It provides a natural and wild environment for every one in New Mexico to enjoy," fishing guide and rock climber Dan Holden said.

At the start of the monument, near the Colorado border, the

Río Grande's Ute Mountain boat run features 24 miles of class II rapids. Then it gets gnarly. The upper box is steep and tight, 6.5 miles of class V rapids that only the most skilled and daring kayakers attempt to float.

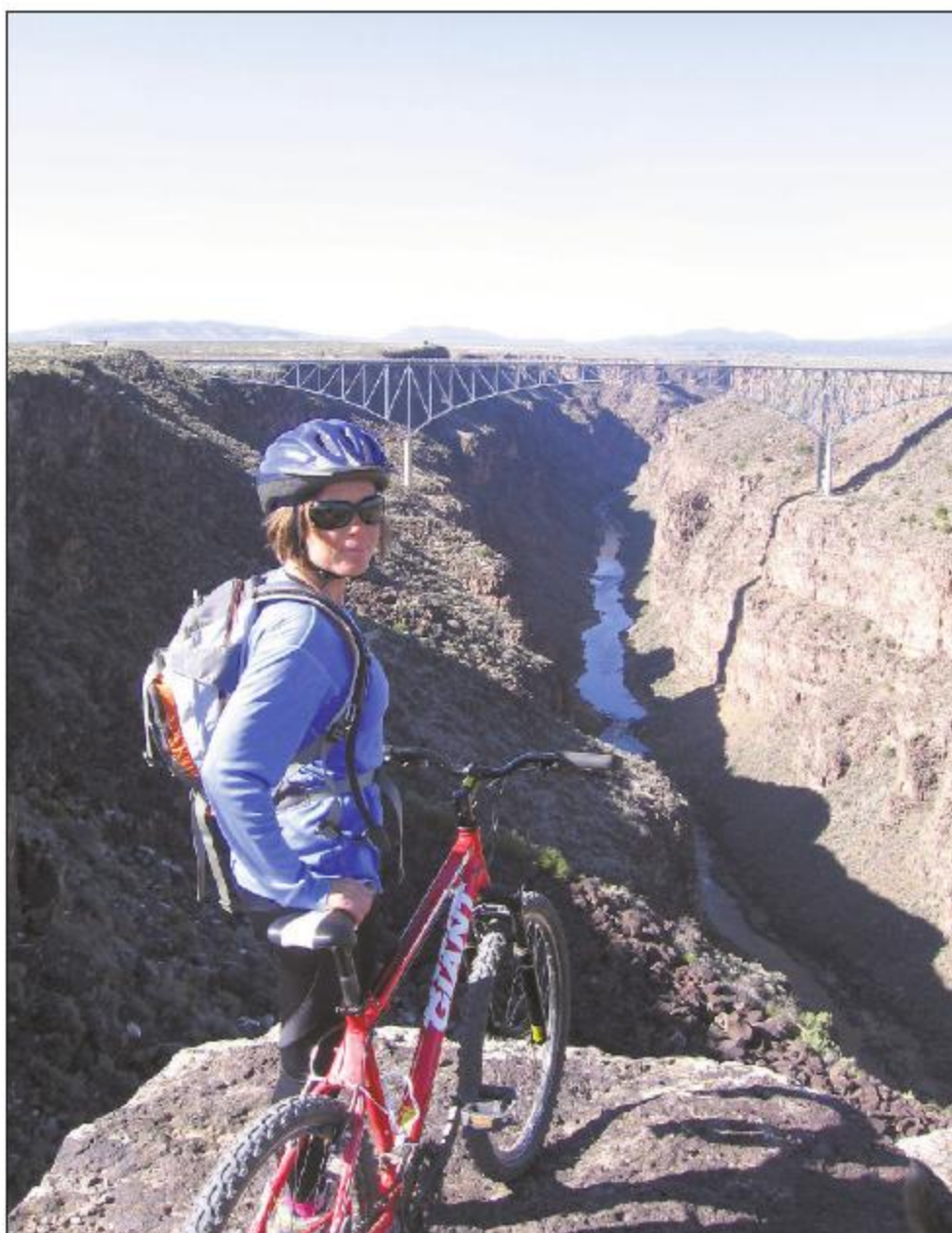
Below the Upper Box is New Mexico's signature run: The Taos Box; 15 miles of class III-V rapids, all rideable in one epic day.

"That's our crown jewel," Los Ríos River Runners president Cisco Guevara said. "It's one of the best whitewater runs in the nation; the rapids setup is ideal."

Unfortunately the Taos Box is only rideable when the river is flowing at 350 cubic feet per second so the season is unpredictable at best. After the Taos Box, however, the river flattens out in the Orilla Verde, providing a perfect area to float, even in low water, before the rapids begin again after the monument in a section known as the Race Course.

While rafters depend on snowpack here and in Colorado for water to ride on, rock climbers and mountain bikers enjoy the monument all year long.

There are numerous mountain biking trails in the area, but three stand out above the others. Horse thief is a rugged and challenging trail near Arroyo Hondo that's perfect for experts.



Courtesy of Cottam's

Cottam's has an expanded fleet of bikes for visitors who want to ride in the new national Monument.

The West Rim trail and the Taos Overlook aren't as challenging as Horse thief, but the single track through the sage overlooking the gorge can be just as jaw-dropping.

"It's spectacular out there," Deveax said. "People can't believe how beautiful it is."

Rock climbers, meanwhile, have 100 different routes between the Wild Rivers area and Pilar to challenge themselves on.

"I absolutely love it," Holden said. "I think it's one of the most unique and undiscovered places to climb."

The same walls that rock climbers enjoy make accessing the river a challenge for fishermen. Those willing to hike to the river, however, are rewarded for their efforts.

"It's amazing," Holden said. "From the John Dunn Bridge to the Colorado border it's untapped. It's more of an effort to get to the river, but the fishing is better and there are bigger fish."

A large portion of the monument also lies west of the Río Grande gorge. Vast herds of elk live in this area, attracting hunters in pursuit of big game.

The monument is so big that knowing where to go can be a challenge in itself.

Local guides and shops, however, know the area well and are a great resource to utilize before venturing out.

"I encourage everyone to take advantage of (the monument)," Deveax said. "It will capture your soul."

"IT'S ONE OF
THE BEST WHITE-
WATER RUNS IN
THE NATION;
THE RAPIDS SETUP
IS IDEAL."

Cisco Guevara

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RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE: PROTECTING AND PRESERVING A NORTHERN NEW MEXICO TREASURE



U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan.

For all those who appreciate the majestic beauty of the Río Grande del Norte and who have such strong connections to the land, this is an exciting time. Thanks to the hard work of so many in the community and the support of President Obama, this treasure of Northern New Mexico will be protected and preserved for future generations.

Living in New Mexico, we have a special connection with the magnificent land we are blessed to live on, and the Río Grande del Norte is one of the crowning jewels of our state. The rich history of the region is exemplified by the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. For generations that predate the United States government and the U.S. Forest Service, our ancestors called the small villages, towns, and pueblos in the region home. Native American and Spanish settlers lived off these lands. Today, we have a diverse and thriving community that benefits from the tourism and recreation made possible by this magnificent place. And because we have joined together and worked hard to protect it, this land will remain a special place that preserves traditions and cultures for generations to come.

I grew up in Northern New Mexico, in the community of Nambé. It was there that I learned the importance of the land and water around us as it sustained our livestock and provided for our family. I learned that we must be good stewards of the land and protect that which is so essential to our way of life. Río Grande del Norte leaves a lasting impression on all those who visit and all those who live off the sustenance it provides, and it is deserving of this national monument designation that ensures its protection.

This important designation will also provide a boost for the local economy, creating economic opportunities for businesses in the surrounding communities. It's estimated that it will lead to \$15 million being injected into the economy and create nearly 300 new jobs, mostly in the tourism sector as people across the country learn what we already know — the Río Grande del Norte is one of our great treasures.

Protecting this land is the right thing to do economically, it's the right thing to do environmentally, and it's the right thing to do for our culture and our traditions.

U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján

A TOTALLY DIFFERENT KIND OF HIGH

While not technically "in" the Monument, the Río Grande Gorge Bridge does impressively span the width of the monument on U.S. Highway 64, offering spectacular views of the gorge and the river that lies at its bottom.

Known to many simply as "the gorge bridge" or "the high bridge," construction on the bridge began in 1963 and was completed in 1965. The steel deck arch bridge spans 1,280 feet across the gorge, with the river setting nearly 600 feet below. According to *highestbridges.com*, the gorge bridge is the 82nd highest bridge in the world and 10th highest in the United States.



The bridge is a popular tourist attraction, with parking available on either end. Sidewalks allow pedestrians to cross the bridge and several platforms that cantilever from the roadway allow visitors to stand several feet from the comfort of the main sidewalk, over the river.

On the west side of the bridge is the Río Grande Gorge Rest Area, which features several picnic tables and shelters and the trailhead to the very popular West Rim Trail, which winds along the rim of the gorge for nine miles to the Taos Junction Bridge. The trail is especially popular in fall and spring and usually hikeable in the winter months too.



Geraint Smith

A rainbow over the Río Grande Gorge Bridge.



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Rio Grande Gorge by Geraint Smith

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MAMMALS, BIRDS, FISH AND PLANT SPECIES OF RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE

BY STEVE TAPIA



The golden eagle rules the roost in the Río Grande del Norte recreation area.

Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus*) — Largest of the deer family, the elk is prominent on the Taos Plateau. More dollars are spent hunting elk, viewing elk, and photographing elk than any other wild animal.

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) — Very agile with eyes wide set on its head to detect predators, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep can see up to one mile. So it's likely that even if you can't see the sheep in the gorge, they can see you.

River otter (*Lontra canadensis*) — Once known to be the most sought-after furbearer in the United States, legal and illegal trapping took its toll to the point where re-introduction efforts became commonplace, including recent efforts in the Río Grande del Norte area.

Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) — Sometimes called the "king of birds," thousands of golden eagles ride the thermals of the Rockies. The noble eagle embodies the wonder and wildness of the rugged west landscape. Many eagles winter in the gorge.

Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) — Common throughout the Rockies, the red-tailed hawk's distinctive scream is often used in films to create a sense of wilderness. It's not uncommon to hear that same scream as you hike or fish in the national monument.

Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) — Most sought-after sport fish in the West, and if you've hooked one or tasted one, you know that's for a good reason. The rainbow, brown and cutthroats of the Río Grande are what draws many anglers to our area.

Piñon pine (*Pinus edulis*) — Known for its quality firewood properties and edible nuts, the piñon is highly sought after locally and throughout the West and picking piñon is protected as a "traditional use" within the national monument.

Common sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) — Perennial shrub with ragged three-toothed leaves, silvery-grey with small white or yellow flowers. Strong sweet smell and bitter taste with deep tap roots to find water.

Rabbitbrush, aka chamisa (*Chrysothamnus*) — Beautiful yellow flowers and "stringy" wood make it ideal for making baskets, shoes, handbags, etc.



A family of big horn sheep in the Río Grande Gorge.

Geraint Smith



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Above, a red-tailed hawk. At left, a pair of river otters.

WILD RIVERS RECREATION AREA OF THE RÍO GRANDE GORGE

Access Point: Wild Rivers Recreation Area of the Río Grande Gorge

While there are myriad ways to access the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, perhaps one of the most developed in terms of campsites and visitor services is the Wild Rivers Recreation Area of the Río Grande Gorge, west of Questa.

**ACCESS
POINT**

and access to great camping and fishing.

Big Arsenic Springs and Little Arsenic trails offer similarly striking descents, for more moderate-level hikers. The Pescado and Las Vistas de Questa trails offer access without quite as much driving (if you're coming from Taos or Questa); the former starts at the Red River fish hatchery and the latter works its way over Punto de Coyote and around Guadalupe Mountain to reach the recreation area.

Of course, fishing is also a big draw, as well as camping (with river campsites and several campgrounds along the gorge rim), biking and other recreational ventures like birdwatching.

Visit blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/recreation/taos/wild_rivers_rec_area.html or call the visitors center at (575) 586-1150.



Geraint Smith

The confluence of the Red River and the Río Grande.

Here, visitors may take in the grandeur of two gorges at the confluence of the Río Grande and the Red River. The La Junta trail offers a difficult 2.4-mile roundtrip hike, 1.2 miles into the gorge, 800 feet of elevation back up; it also offers some amazing views

ORILLA VERDE HAS MUCH TO OFFER IN MONUMENT'S SOUTHERN REACHES

The Orilla Verde Area of the Río Grande Gorge is just as established as a recreation area as Wild Rivers, and more accessible to the town of Taos.

**ACCESS
POINT**

Management regulations for boating safety, equipment and registration.

Anglers will also enjoy the area for its abundance of rainbow and brown trout and even some northern pike. All anglers must have a valid New Mexico fishing license and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Validation in their possession. Licenses can be purchased at the nearby Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center on State Road 68.

Hiking and biking are also popular activities in this portion of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument.

For more information, visit blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/recreation/taos/orilla_verde.html or call the Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center at (575) 751-4899.

Just past the village of Pilar on State Road 570 (turn left off of State Road 68 at Pilar, coming from Taos), Orilla Verde features seven campgrounds right on the river, making it a great place for boaters to camp, or for folks to spend a day playing in the water. Two of the campgrounds even feature RV hookups.

The section of the Río Grande occupied by Orilla Verde is ideal for canoeing, kayaking and gentle raft rides. All boaters must comply with the State of New Mexico and Bureau of Land

The smooth waters of the Río Grande within the Orilla Verde Recreation Area.

Geraint Smith





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-Ernestine Ulmer



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GET TO KNOW THE WILDLIFE OF THE GORGE THROUGH THE LENS OF A CAMERA

Text and photos by Geraint Smith

Arriving in Taos for the first time 30 years ago on Thanksgiving evening, the Río Grande Gorge lay silent, void of any life except our headlights illuminating the silhouette shoulders of giant rock buttresses. As we crested the gorge our eyes couldn't make out the ubiquitous "lone tree" or the grander view of the gorge and Taos Plateau beyond. Our eyes could, however, discern billions of stars and a faint patch of snow on a distant mountain.

Long before the Río Grande del Norte National Monument and its highlighted boundaries on the new map, I hiked and biked trails I didn't know were even on a map; bushwhacked down side canyons, with slick rock; inner-tubed and hiked along the river, all the while oblivious to any wildlife.

Twenty years ago I spotted my first bald eagle in the gorge, sitting in a tree on the west side of the river. This was my first eagle sighting. I wanted to see more eagles.

Many hours in the field with my camera and an open appreciation for the nature around me, I began to understand the saying "chance favors the prepared mind." I understood that if I wanted to see eagles I had to go to where the eagles are.

Frequenting the Orilla Verde Recreation Area in subsequent years, I began to see patterns in the cycle of life there. I enjoyed camping, fishing and playing in the river with the kids and trips to the horse pasture. Spending many hours with friends who were farming, I observed the seasons through planting, cultivating and harvesting. One day, in the solitude and peace of the winter landscape in the Orilla Verde, as if pulled from a magician's hat ... EAGLES!

Many eagles began showing up each year at Thanksgiving and I began to think of them as kindred spirits. After dropping the children off at school during the winter months, I would spend three to four mornings a week down in the Orilla Verde with the eagles. I came to know their behavior and flight patterns and I am sure they came to know mine.

At some point I acquired the rather large 500mm lens with the Canon trademark white coating, and a front element as big as a head. I swear the bird could see itself in there. At the sight of this lens the bird would launch from its roost into the lava cliffs of the gorge, camouflaged against the rocks.

It took me some time to realize that seeing this flash of white probably resembled a muzzle flash to the eagle. I purchased some sticky camo tape and wrapped the lens to disguise it. I assume this assuaged the eagles' fear of the former "white" lens. The bird no longer launched off upon my producing it.

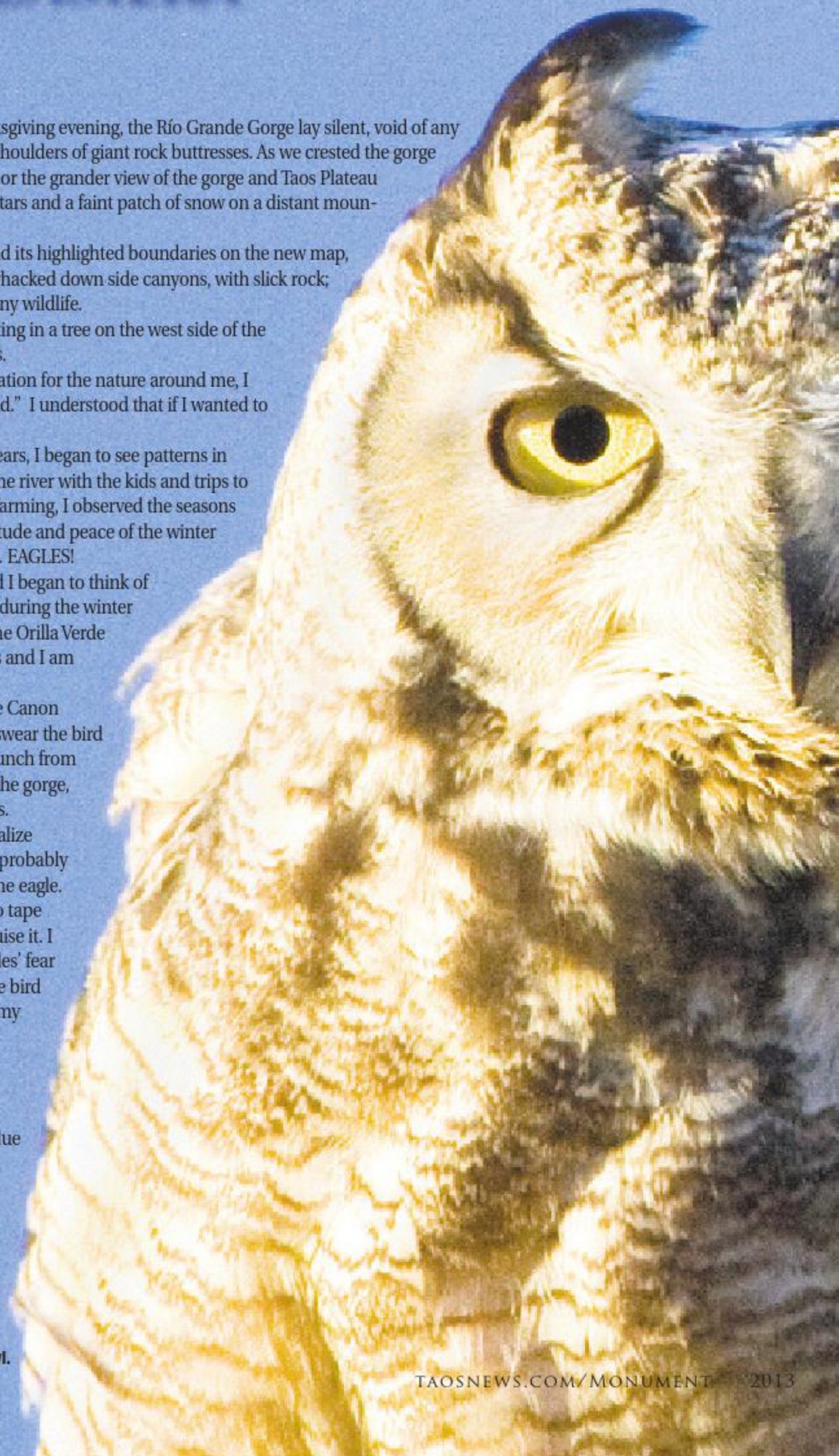
The past 10 years I have enjoyed many trips into the recently designated national monument. There are great blue heron, bobcat, bighorn sheep, coyote, pronghorn, deer, elk

and eagles (golden and bald). There are also hawks and other raptors (red-tailed, rough-legged, swainson's, peregrine falcons, coopers, northern harriers, great horned owls, pygmy owls, american kestrels, turkey vultures). Not to mention ducks and geese, (bufflehead, common goldeneye, snow geese, canada



A great blue heron on the banks of the Río Grande.

A great horned owl.





Canada geese lift off from the Río Grande in Taos County.

geese, mallard, coots), or bluebirds, solitaires, flickers, canyon wrens, rock wrens, towhees, lewis woodpeckers, ravens. The list goes on ...

As a photographer, one of the questions I get asked most often is "you must have a lot of patience to get the photos you do?"

Patience is a big part of it. The cameras set to the optimum shutter speed, and readily available on the seat next to me, is equally as important. Gaining an ever-growing familiarity of the region and an understanding of the habits and nature of wild-life, is most beneficial to the photographer and can create a mutual respect for our kin, the animals.

Consider the elk. They are very active in the monument during the winter

months and can be seen frequently between Tres Piedres and the Colorado border on the west side of the gorge. Pronghorn are present throughout the year and bighorn sheep can often be seen on the rim of the Río Grande Gorge, using their inimitable rock climbing skills as they observe visitors clinging to the handrails on the high bridge. Golden eagles nest in the security on inaccessible ledges in the gorge cliffs. Bald eagles reside in the National Monument year round. If you really want to see these magnificent creatures "doing their thing" in the area, visit in the winter and go early in the morning. The birds are more active at this time, fishing or robbing other creatures of their catches.

Regarding equipment, choose as long a lens as you can afford. It will get you some good closeup shots of the wildlife in the area. Bicycling along the gorge rim may bring you in close contact with a group of bighorn sheep which one can capture with a point and shoot camera, and preserve on your wall as a 16-by-20-inch print.

Use a fast shutter speed, put your camera on continuous focus and pan with a bird if it is in flight. If the wildlife is moving toward you the tracking mechanism will keep the subject in focus.

And if you are in a group of people and a bear you are watching decides to come running at you, never try to outrun the bear. You only need to run faster than the slowest person in your group.

Over the years I spent photographing in the new Río Grande del Norte National Monument, I've come to realize that there were many pairs of eyes who saw us that Thanksgiving evening so long ago.



A bobcat ready for a nap.



MONUMENT MEANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR NORTHERN NEW MEXICO

BY ANDREW OXFORD

The truly enterprising have never been deterred by the stark and wild landscapes of the Río Grande del Norte.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the area was a popular route for traders and trappers connecting the Southwest.

Homesteaders tried their luck on the forested slopes of Cerro Montoso in the 1920s. The settlements may have long since given way to the wilderness but they were not the last to see opportunity in the area.

Ranching families, many descended from Northern New Mexico's first Spanish settlers, continue to graze more than 15,000 cattle across the Río Grande del Norte.

Today, more than 300 people earn a living in the area. That number is expected to nearly double with increased tourism following the Río Grande del Norte's designation as a national monument.

An economic study completed in 2012 projected the designation could dramatically increase the number of visitors to the 242,555-acre site from 325,000 to more than 485,000. Those visitors, the study indicated, would include more than 165,000 people interested in viewing wildlife as well as more than 80,000

hikers and 50,000 anglers.

"A public land designation, such as a national monument, may signal enhanced quality of a potential visitor experience, substantially increasing visitation," the study by Denver-based BBC Research and Consulting reported.

The expected annual economic impact of the designation, according to the study, could reach \$32.2 million. Such a boost would represent an increase of about \$15 million in regional eco-

See ECONOMY, page 20



Courtesy Photo

Not only will Taos hotels and bed and breakfasts see a bump from national monument tourists, but so will accommodations up and down the monument, such as the MW Bar Ranch in Amalia (mwbarranch.com).

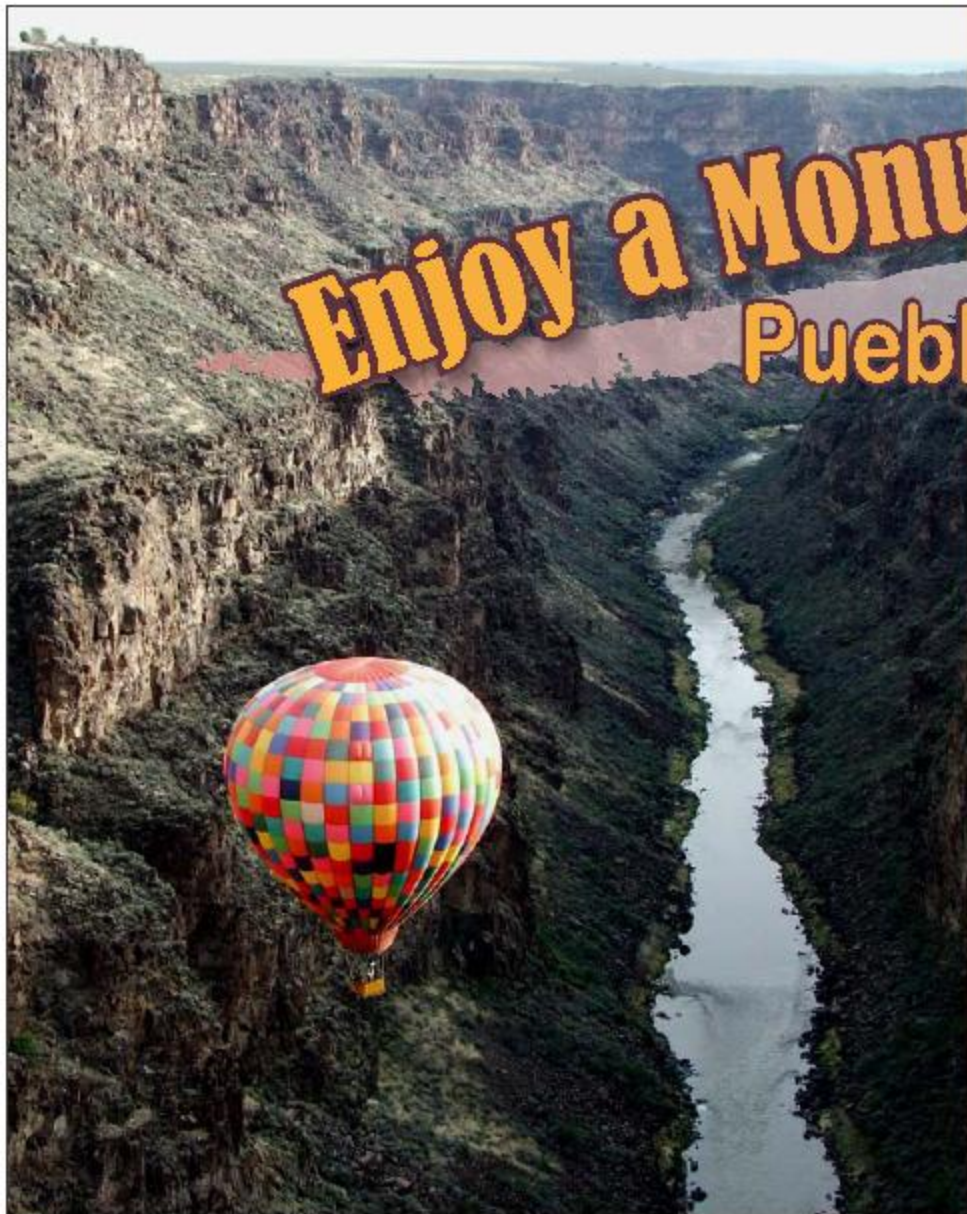


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ECONOMY, from page 18

conomic activity with the lodging, restaurant and recreation industries experiencing the largest boons.

Annual economic output in the lodging sector alone, the study asserted, could be expected to increase from \$3,235,811 to \$6,287,049 with employment in that industry rising from 39 to 76. Similarly, the restaurant sector would see annual economic

output of \$6,794,656 from \$3,494,629 with employment rising from 62 to 122. Groceries and gasoline would see the third largest benefit, with economic output rising from an annual \$1,121,905 to \$2,007,855 and a similar increase in employment from 74 to 138.

Local tour operators are hoping to seize on the heightened interest among tourists.

"We've been getting some calls from our current outfitters and guides that they have seen somewhat of an uptick in interest in outfitted trips by boat in the monument," said John Bailey, assistant field manager at the Bureau Land Management's Taos office. "The flows are low this year but the river is still there and it is still fun to boat."

Hunters, anglers and hot air balloonists are also preparing for busier-than-usual seasons.

The future of the Río Grande del Norte, however, will entail balancing the monument's potential as an eco-tourism destination with the region's traditional agricultural role.

"There is an expectation that we will manage the monument not only to protect the values described in the proclamation but also to allow people who live in this area to develop a business that is green in nature," Bailey said.

The presidential proclamation included not only flowery descriptions of the region's flora and fauna but also a clear dedication to preserving the economic value of the land.

Grazing leases will remain in place.

Families will maintain the right to collect firewood and piñon nuts as they have for generations.

The BLM's future management plan could also include new ways for traditional users of the land to capitalize on the area's natural resources.

"Some of the commercial cutters actually help us meet some of our management guidance where we are trying to thin the forest for fire purposes or create a more diverse habitat for wildlife," Bailey said. "They do have a role to play out there."



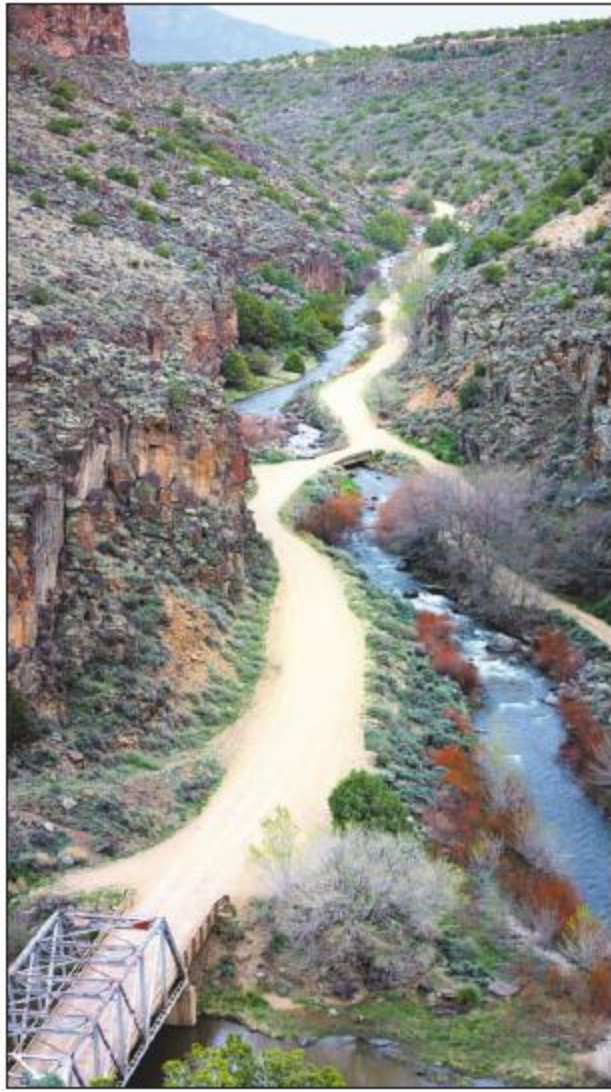
Courtesy Photo

Guides like Stuart Wilde, whose business Wild Earth Llama Adventures makes treks into the Río Grande Gorge, should see an increase in customers due to the designation of the Río Grande National Monument.

"WE'VE BEEN GETTING SOME CALLS FROM OUR CURRENT OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES THAT THEY HAVE SEEN SOMEWHAT OF AN UPTICK IN INTEREST IN OUTFITTED TRIPS BY BOAT IN THE MONUMENT. THE FLOWS ARE LOW THIS YEAR BUT THE RIVER IS STILL THERE AND IT IS STILL FUN TO BOAT."

John Bailey, assistant field manager at the Bureau Land Management's Taos office.

JOHN DUNN BRIDGE



The John Dunn Bridge, which crosses the Río Grande at its confluence with the Arroyo Hondo might be considered primarily a locals' hangout within the new monument.

The area around the bridge has long been popular with fishermen and rafters (the famous Taos Box run starts here), as well as families who want to play in the water and beat the heat during the hot summer months.

ACCESS POINT

There are actually a couple of nice "beach" areas along the river in this area.

Also, on the river's west banks lies the Black Rock natural hot springs, just across the John Dunn Bridge. John's Wall, a popular rock climbing area is also nearby.

The Arroyo Hondo running into the Río Grande just south of the John Dunn Bridge (lower left).

Geraint Smith

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UTE MOUNTAIN: THE WILD CORNER OF THE MONUMENT

Near the Colorado border, in the northeastern-most corner of the new national monument is Ute Mountain, the highest point within the monument, at 10,093 feet. In fact, it's the highest point on Bureau of Land Management land in the entire state.

The freestanding dormant volcano is now covered in piñon trees at its base and ponderosa, aspen, white pine and Douglas Fir at its higher elevations, making it one of the more biologically diverse areas of the monument.

ACCESS POINT

Prior to the mountain's acquisition by the BLM, the area was managed as a refuge for elk, with water sources and planted fields to supply feed. This management strategy, along with the mountain's relative isolation has proved beneficial for many species besides elk.

In contrast to the Wild Rivers and Orilla de Verde areas of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, Ute Mountain is about as undeveloped as possible, with virtually no roads in and out. Game trails and trenches formed by forestry skidders when

the mountain was being logged in the early- to mid-20th century form the principal hiking paths.

Now, as part of the monument, Ute Mountain will stay relatively unchanged; leaving a place where visitors can see a very natural environment, if they are willing and able to get there. Hunting is still the most popular recreational activity in the area.



Gerant Smith

Ute Mountain, as seen from across a nearby field with a circle-pivot irrigation sprinkler.

TAOS PLATEAU: AN UNASSUMING TREASURE

Some landscapes do not reveal their true identity on first visit. The Taos Plateau is certainly one of these special places where there is more than meets the eye.

A vast plain, broken up by what appear to be a series of relatively small hills and mountains, the Plateau is the one of the largest volcanic fields in the Río Grande Rift. Those mountains rising out of the plateau are extinct volcanoes, like Ute Mountain and Cerro de la Olla.

As the southern portion of the San Luis Basin, the Plateau is

ACCESS POINT

composed of 3- to 5 million-year-old basalts that erupted from the cinder cones and shield volcanoes hidden on the seemingly tranquil prairie.

Many miles of unimproved dirt roads exist on the Taos Plateau, providing access for scenic drives, hunting and hiking. The primary access to the plateau is near mile marker 401 on U.S. Highway 285 north of Tres Piedras. High clearance and four-wheel-drive vehicles may be required depending on conditions. TP130 also parallels the gorge west of the John Dunn Bridge all the way to the Colorado border.



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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

A PROCLAMATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In far Northern New Mexico, the Río Grande Wild and Scenic River flows through a deep gorge at the edge of the stark and sweeping expanse of the Taos Plateau. Volcanic cones, including the Cerro de la Olla, Cerro San Antonio, and Cerro del Yuta, jut up from this surrounding plateau. Canyons, volcanic cones, wild rivers, and native grasslands harbor vital wildlife habitat, unique geologic resources, and imprints of human passage through the landscape over the past 10,000 years. This extraordinary landscape of extreme beauty and daunting harshness is known as the Río Grande del Norte, and its extraordinary array of scientific and historic resources offer opportunities to develop our understanding of the forces that shaped northern New Mexico, including the diverse ecological systems and human cultures that remain present today.

For millennia, humans have seasonally passed through the Río Grande del Norte, gathering resources and finding spiritual meaning in its dramatic geologic features. Although few have attempted to live year-round in this harsh landscape, the images carved into the gorge's dark basalt cliffs and the artifacts scattered across the forested slopes of the volcanic cones bear ample testimony to the human use of the area.

The Río Grande gorge lies within the traditional area of the nearby Taos and Picuris Pueblos, as well as the Jicarilla Apache and Ute Tribes, and hosts a dazzling array of rock art. Carved into the boulders and cliffs are hundreds of images ranging from seemingly abstract swirls and dots to clear depictions of human and animal figures. Dense collections of petroglyphs are found near the hot springs that bubble up in the deep heart of the gorge, with some dating back to the Archaic Period (ca. 7,500 B.C. – 500 A.D.). In addition to petroglyphs, these lands harbor small hunting blinds, pit houses, chipping stations, potsherds, tools and projectile points, as well as large ceramic vessels. The area is home to a rich array of archaeological resources that represent diverse cultural traditions. Archeological resources are found throughout the proposed monument, with its rugged terrain serving as the focal point for ongoing archaeological research. More recent artifacts and images mark the passage of settlers and Hispanic explorers dating back to the early 18th century. Ongoing explorations and inquiries of this unique cultural landscape have resulted in continuous discoveries that further illuminate northern New Mexico's human history.

Separated from the Río Grande Wild and Scenic River by a broad swath of sagebrush and grassland, the Río San Antonio gorge is another area of concentrated artifact and petroglyph sites. People were drawn to this area by the flowing water, hunting opportunities, and nearby San Antonio Mountain, which is thought to have been a major regional source for the dacite used by nomadic peoples to create stone tools thousands of years ago. This corner of the Río Grande del Norte landscape was traversed by traders and other travelers during the 18th and 19th centuries, who traded furs and other goods and later brought woolen articles from New Mexico's sheep grazing communities to markets throughout the Southwest.

Between the Río Grande gorge and the Río San Antonio gorge

stretches a sweeping and austere expanse of the Taos Plateau. The Río Grande del Norte landscape is a testament to the geologic past of New Mexico and the 70 million year tectonic history of the Río Grande Rift, one of the world's major rift systems. Composed of Servilleta lava basalts and rhyolites, the Taos Plateau has long been a center of research in geology and volcanology. Rising in stark contrast from the plateau's broad expanse, Cerro de la Olla, Cerro San Antonio, and other volcanic cones provide visible reminders of the area's volatile past. Cerro del Yuta, or Ute Mountain, the tallest of these extinct volcanoes, rises above the plateau to an elevation topping 10,000 feet. Springs within the Río Grande gorge have been measured emitting 6,000 gallons of water per minute into the river bed and are thought to be part of a flooded lava tube system.

This northern New Mexico landscape also exhibits significant ecological diversity in these different geologic areas. From the cottonwood and willows along the Río Grande corridor, to the expansive sagebrush plains above the gorge on the Taos Plateau, the piñons at the base of Ute Mountain, and the spruce, aspen, and Douglas fir covering the mountain's northern slopes, the diversity of both ecosystems and species allows for, and has been the subject of, substantial scientific research.

The Río Grande gorge connects the northern reaches of the river's watershed with its middle and lower stretches. Deep within the gorge, beneath soaring cliffs that rise hundreds of feet above the river, stands of willow and cottonwood thrive in riparian and canyon ecosystems that have been present since the river first appeared in the Río Grande Rift Valley. The river provides habitat for fish such as the Río Grande cutthroat trout as well as the recently reintroduced North American river otter. The Río Grande del Norte is part of the Central Migratory Flyway, a vital migration corridor for birds such as Canada geese, herons, sandhill cranes, hummingbirds, and American avocets. Several species of bats make their home in the gorge, which also provides important nesting habitat for golden eagles and numerous other raptor species, as well as habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher.

Bald eagles roost above the river in winter and fly out over the Taos Plateau's sagebrush shrub habitat and native grasslands, which stretch for thousands of acres to the west. The vast plateau harbors a significant diversity of mammals and birds, from the eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls soaring above the plateau to the small mammals on which they prey. Many other bird species, including Merriam's turkey, scaled quail, mourning dove, mountain plover, and loggerhead shrike, can be seen or heard on the plateau. Large mammals, including the Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, pronghorn, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, find their winter homes on the plateau alongside a population of rare Gunnison's prairie dogs. The Río Grande del Norte also provides habitat for many species of predators, including the ringtail, black bear, coyote, red fox, cougar, and bobcat.

See PROCLAMATION, page 30



An aerial view of the Río Grande Gorge bridge.
Chris Dahl-Bradline/taosaerialimages.com

EXPLORING THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

BY CARRIE LEVEN

Before ever setting foot on the land, archaeologists begin their investigation by studying maps of the area. We check the boundaries and access (availability of gas stations), and look for geologic features that might influence human activities on the land.

Prominent features in the Río Grande del Norte include an 800-foot deep gorge which limits easy east-west travel, volcanoes

reaching 8,500 to 10,093 feet elevation, the high plains cut by canyons with hidden creeks and the surrounding San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountain ranges to the west and east. Searching for clues about the people who once lived here, we read what archaeologists, historians, and travelers have written.

A map of the area is found online at the Bureau of Land Management website

rock art to prehistoric hunting blinds made of stacked rock to Plains campsites with teepee rings to a 1915-1930s homesteading community that had a schoolhouse and water catchment system."

The research adds to the knowledge gleaned by BLM archaeologists and Taos Archaeological Society volunteers who recorded rock art (petroglyphs) carved into the basalt (lava) cliffs and boulders at Big Arsenic Springs and elsewhere across the Monument.

"The diversity of petroglyphs suggests people have been coming to the Río Grande over a long range of time," Dicks said. "We've seen archaic period geometric symbols on the same rocks as anthropomorphic and animal symbols from later Anasazi and Pueblo art, to historic Plains and Apache drawings, Penitente crosses, and modern graffiti."

The diverse groups of people who came to the area during favorable environmental conditions survived by making their own tools, body coverings, and shelters as they migrated during seasonal hunting and collecting expeditions. A closer look at riparian zones and water sources, and vegetated areas around mountains and volcanoes, often reveals chips of black-colored stone left over from manufacturing and sharpening stone tools. Lava flows from volcanoes like San Antonio Mountain, Cerro Negro, and Cerro Montoso provided the volcanic material composed of glassy andesite and dacite used to fashion knives, scrapers, and dart points.

As weather became wetter and plant resources more abundant, people began using grinding slabs (metates) and hand stones (manos) to process seeds, nuts, grasses and other plant material. Historic climate data show the region was affected by our familiar extended periods of devastating drought. The limited water supply, harsh winters and extreme temperatures, encouraged only temporary occupation, as waves of people migrated through the area.

"People in Río Grande del Norte maintained a hunter-gatherer 'archaic' lifeway until the arrival of the horse," explains Dicks.

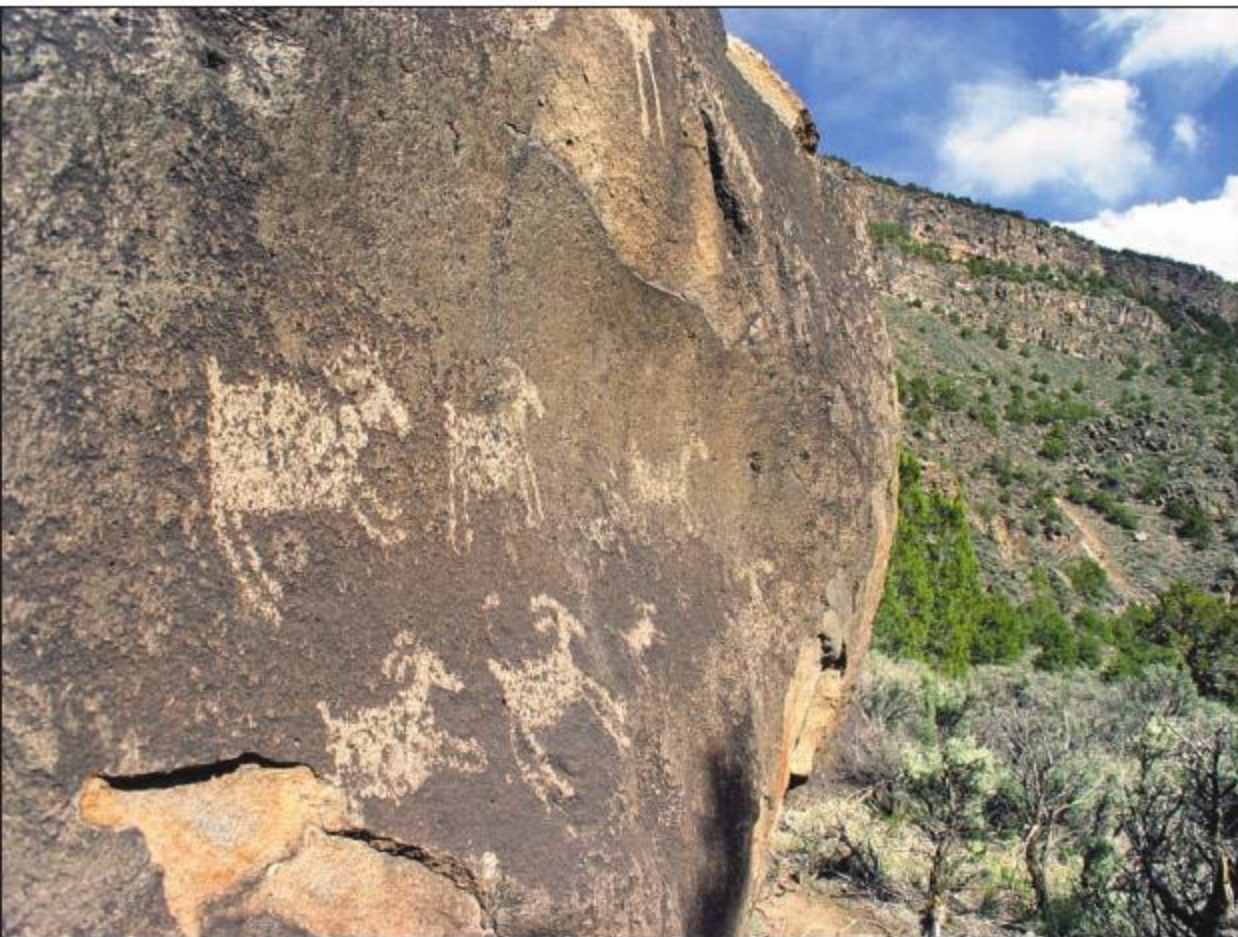
The old routes and mutual trails used by ancient peoples, Indian groups, Spanish explorers, trappers, traders and merchants run adjacent to the Río Grande gorge, and on the western edge near Río San Antonio.

"Sheep herding within the Monument area began after about 1885 when the threat of raiding from nomadic groups, such as the Ute, sufficiently diminished," Dicks says. "The Chili Line railroad likely followed an old route, and contributed to development of the west side of the gorge in the vicinity of Highway 285."

The BLM invites you to begin your exploration at Wild Rivers Recreation Area, with the archaeology display at the Visitors Center.

Then take a hike to Big Arsenic Springs to enjoy the water pool and discover the rock art. While there, you might notice some of the subtle evidence of the people who created the drawings, and attain that magical and timeless feeling of what it was like to be here long ago.

Carrie Levin is an archeologist for the Forest Service, based in Questa.



File Photo

Ancient petroglyphs exist throughout the Río Grande del Norte National Monument.

[and on page 34 of this publication], along with the Presidential Proclamation describing the unique archaeology of the new monument. The Río Grande del Norte is protected under the Antiquities Act of 1906, designated to preserve its natural, scientific, cultural, prehistoric, historic objects and legacy as beneficial to all Americans. The land is part of the traditional area of the Ute and Jicarilla Apache Tribes, as well Taos and Picuris Pueblos.

Merrill Dicks directs the archaeology program at the BLM Taos Field Office and manages the cultural resources on the monument. Dicks has explored and studied the area extensively for the past 10 years, saying, "We've recorded hundreds of sites throughout the Monument that show use of the land and resources for the past 10,000 years. We've seen everything from

Río Grande Del Norte National Monument archaeology: blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/national_monuments/rio_grande_del_norte.html

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Photo by Rick Romberg



File Photo

The sweet smell of piñon firewood is ubiquitous in Northern New Mexico.

TRADITIONAL USES PROTECTED WITH MONUMENT STATUS

BY ANDY DENNISON

At most times, you can find someone out on the Taos Plateau, on the slopes of the cerros or down in the Río Grande Gorge who is using the land as it has been used for hundreds of years.

Long before Taos became an artist or tourist destination, it was home to subsistence communities of Hispanics and Native Americans who relied upon the bounty of the rivers, sageland, forests and mountains for survival. Whether it be grazing cattle

or sheep, collecting piñon nuts or cutting firewood, locals of the Taos Valley knew where to go to get what they needed.

One of those places is the area that is now the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. Covering nearly 243,000 acres, the newly designated monument not only protects the land from certain development (mining and mineral leasing) but also preserves access for the

their favorite fishing hole. These days, the Río Grande from the Colorado border to Taos Junction is a federally protected Wild and Scenic River. It's also designated as "special trout waters," with a daily limit of three browns, cutthroats or rainbows.

Historically every fall, hundreds of Taoseños head to the hills to hunt for an elk or deer that provides meat through the next winter. The volcanic cerros on the Taos Plateau are home to large elk herds that migrate daily to the Río Grande Gorge and tributaries to feed and water. Mule deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep and antelope all roam the rugged terrain — and challenge a hunter's skill and experience.

Game & Fish runs a lottery for hunting permits in the area, which is primarily Unit 50 west of the river.

Grazing has been a traditional use on these historic grasslands. Prior to federal control in the early 1900s, the area was open range for sheep and cattle. Spanish heirs to the San Antonio del Río Colorado Land Grant shared the grazing lands as part of communal lands for all.

After BLM took over regulation of grazing, some 45 "allotments" were divvied up among permittees. Most of the 30 current permit-holders bring in cattle from southern Colorado to the area from the border to Pot Mountain. However, some of the oldest permittee families live in the Questa area, and their herds feed on grasslands in Chiflo and southward.

Typically, cows spend May to October on these lands, although many permittees also have access to higher ground in the surrounding U.S. National Forest, according to BLM's James Harmon. In drought years, however, Harmon said less than a half-dozen permittees will bring in their cattle to graze — and then, only for a couple of weeks.

For centuries, locals have headed to the cerros west of the gorge for piñon nuts. It's common to see dozens of vehicles parked by the side of U.S. 285 or out on the BLM dirt roads as folks crouch under trees in the piñon-juniper forest harvesting the smooth and buttery nuts. Roasted and salted, they have been a staple of the Taos Valley diet for centuries. BLM limits collectors to 25 pounds a year.

The fall season means time to collect firewood for the winter. Generations of locals have filled their pickup trucks with dead piñon and juniper that flourish on the high ground of the national monument. Both are among the longest burning firewoods available in the pine forests of Northern New Mexico.

BLM rotates firewood collection areas from year to year according to thinning and fire-prevention projects their crews conduct, according to BLM forester Peter Hoagland. Currently, collecting areas are located on Cerro Montoso and Cerro del Aire (Wind Mountain). Permits are \$12 a cord, with an eight-cord limit.



Tina Larkin

Roasted and salted piñon nuts are a New Mexican staple and without the protection of traditional uses in the national monument, it would be hard for many locals to find enough piñon to eat or sell.

"traditional uses" that have been so critical to life on the hardscrabble lands of Northern New Mexico.

The Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has the task of managing the nation's newest unit of National Conservation Lands. This fall, the office will begin to develop a full-blown management plan for the area, according to assistant field manager John Bailey.

But, for the foreseeable future, things continue on as they have for many centuries. Hunting and fishing are among the most common activities in the national monument area. While the BLM keeps tabs on the habitat for wildlife and fish, it's the New Mexico Game & Fish Department that regulates what hunters and anglers can and cannot do.

Virtually all of the Río Grande within the monument has been prime trout fishing territory for locals. Access is easiest from the John Dunn or Taos Junction bridges, but local fishermen have been known to scramble down the lava rock cliffs of the gorge to reach



Shutterstock.com

Yucca roots can be used to make soap.

HELPFUL PLANTS

Medicinal herbs have long been gathered from the river's edge, plateau and cerros of this area. The curanderas, or native healers, relied upon the vegetative bounty from mountains to river for the plants and herbs with which they treated locals long before physicians or hospitals showed up.

Longtime gatherer Rob Hawley of Taos Herb provides a short list of the medicinal plants and herbs found within the monument's borders:

Chamiso, or sage, used for teas and compresses.

Verdo laga, or purslane, for food.

Collalle, or rattlesnake broom, to treat arthritis in a bath.

Chamaja leaves used to relieve digestive problems.

Yucca, for soap from the roots.

Prickly pear and brickelia, to treating diabetes.

Willow, as a natural aspirin alternative.

Chamisa (rabbitbrush) in bloom in late summer.

PROCLAMATION, *from page 24*

While diverse peoples have used this area intermittently for thousands of years, its challenging conditions make it inhospitable for permanent settlement. In an area near the forested slopes of Cerro Montoso, however, a group of eastern homesteaders attempted to make a living in the years immediately following World War I. The nearly forgotten story of this fleeting community, recently revealed through detailed historical research, is written on the landscape by the remnants of homes, root cellars, cistern-style

water catchments, and cast metal toys. At one site, researchers have found several World War I brass uniform buttons, evidence of the veterans who once made their homes on this rugged land.

The protection of the Río Grande del Norte will preserve its cultural, prehistoric, and historic legacy and maintain its diverse array of natural and scientific resources, ensuring that the historic and scientific values of this area remain for the benefit of all Americans.

WHEREAS section 2 of the Act of June 8, 1906 (34 Stat. 225, 16 U.S.C. 431) (the "Antiquities Act"), authorizes the President, in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments, and to reserve as a part thereof parcels of land, the limits of which in all cases shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected;

WHEREAS it is in the public interest to preserve the objects of scientific and historic interest on the Río Grande del Norte lands;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by the authority vested in me by section 2 of the Antiquities Act, hereby proclaim, set apart, and reserve as the Río Grande del Norte National Monument (monument), the objects identified above and all lands and interest in lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States within the boundaries described on the accompanying map, which is attached to and forms a part of this proclamation. These reserved Federal lands and interests in lands encompass approximately 242,555 acres, which is the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.

All Federal lands and interests in lands within the boundaries of this monument are hereby appropriated and withdrawn from all forms of entry, location, selection, sale, leasing, or other disposition under the public land laws, including withdrawal from location, entry, and patent under the mining laws, and from disposition under all laws relating to mineral and geothermal leasing, other than by exchange that furthers the protective purposes of this proclamation.

The establishment of this monument is subject to valid existing rights. Lands and interests in lands within the monument's

boundaries not owned or controlled by the United States shall be reserved as part of the monument upon acquisition of ownership or control by the United States.

The Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) shall manage the monument through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as a unit of the National Landscape Conservation System, pursuant to applicable legal authorities, including the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906, 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.), to implement the purposes of this proclamation.

For purposes of protecting and restoring the objects identified above, the Secretary, through the BLM, shall prepare and maintain a management plan for the monument and shall provide for maximum public involvement in the development of that plan including, but not limited to, consultation with tribal, State, and local governments as well as community land grant and acequia associations.

Except for emergency or authorized administrative purposes, motorized vehicle use in the monument shall be permitted only on designated roads and non-motorized mechanized vehicle use shall be permitted only on designated roads and trails.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to preclude the Secretary from renewing or authorizing the upgrading of existing utility line rights-of-way within the physical scope of each such right-of-way that exists on the date of this proclamation. Additional utility line rights-of-way or upgrades outside the existing utility line rights-of-way may only be authorized if consistent with the care and management of the objects identified above.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to enlarge or diminish the rights of any Indian tribe or pueblo. The Secretary shall, in consultation with Indian tribes, ensure the protection of religious and cultural sites in the monument and provide access to the sites by members of Indian tribes for traditional cultural and customary uses, consistent with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (92 Stat. 469, 42 U.S.C. 1996) and Executive Order 13007 of May 24, 1996 (Indian Sacred Sites).

Laws, regulations, and policies followed by the BLM in issuing and administering grazing permits or leases on lands under its jurisdiction shall continue to apply with regard to the lands in the monument, consistent with the purposes of this proclamation.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to alter or affect the Río Grande Compact between the States of Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, or to create any reservation of water in the monument.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of the State of New Mexico with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to preclude the traditional collection of firewood and piñon nuts in the monument for personal non-commercial use consistent with the purposes of this proclamation.

Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to revoke any existing withdrawal, reservation, or appropriation; however, the monument shall be the dominant reservation.

Warning is hereby given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure, destroy, or remove any feature of the monument and not to locate or settle upon any of the lands thereof.

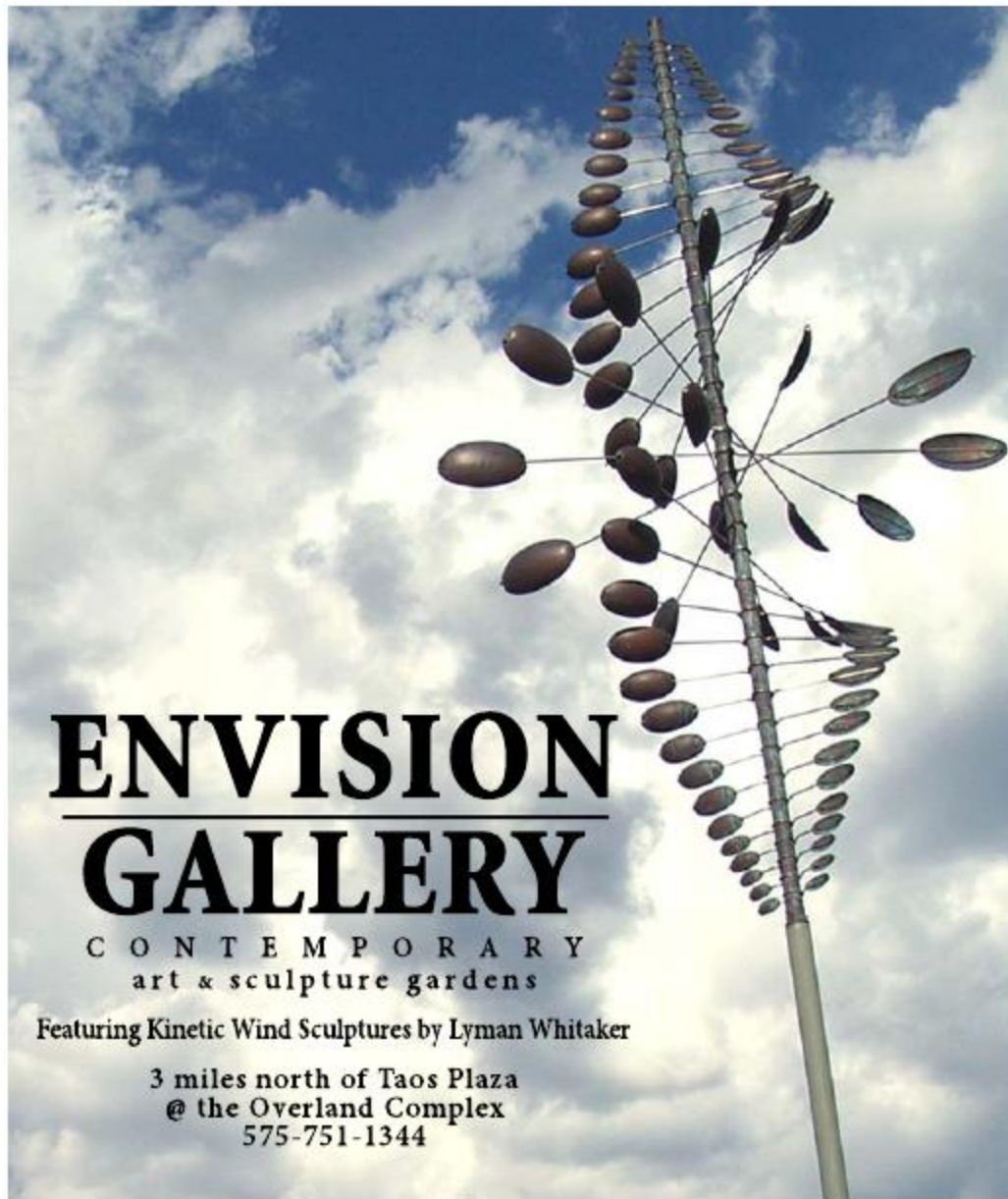
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand thirteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-seventh.

BARACK OBAMA



Official White House Photo, March 25, 2013

Supporters of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument join President Barack Obama in the Oval Office during the signing of the proclamation that created the monument.



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RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE: MILLIONS OF YEARS IN THE MAKING

MATTHEW VAN BUREN

Visitors to the Río Grande del Norte have many opportunities to step back in time — and not just the thousands of years humans have passed through the area, but the millions over which the current landscape was formed.

The proclamation President Obama signed to create the national monument notes the “70-million-year tectonic history of the Río Grande Rift.”

“Composed of Servilleta lava basalts and rhyolites, the Taos Plateau has long been a center of research in geology and volcanology,” the proclamation reads.

“Rising in stark contrast from the plateau’s broad expanse, Cerro de la Olla, Cerro San Antonio and other volcanic cones provide visible reminders of the area’s volatile past.”

The mountains, minerals and strata that can be found in the monument are evidence of the area’s volcanic past.

Geologists estimate the Río Grande Rift, which runs from Leadville, Colo., to Chihuahua, Mexico, is “fairly young” and probably started opening as long as 30 million years ago.

“That’s young in geologic history,” UNM-Taos geology instructor Deborah Ragland said in an interview with *The Taos News*.

Near Taos, the rift is about 20-25 miles wide, Ragland said, running between the Tusas Mountains to the west the Sangre de Cristos to the east. Geologist Tony Benson said movement is still occurring, and it is likely the Rift is still pulling apart. A GPS

study shows westward movement at a rate of about 1.5-2.5 millimeters per year.

Benson said “legends from the Pueblo” tell of earthquakes long ago; though none have occurred recently, he said the area’s extensive fault system makes it likely they will again.

“Someday we’re going to see an earthquake again,” he said. Paul Bauer, with the New Mexico Bureau of Geology at New

Mexico Tech, said the volcanoes are best characterized as dormant, as there has not been an eruption in the national monument area in more than 2 million years.

“There are younger rift volcanoes nearby, such as Valles Caldera supervolcano that experienced a mammoth eruption 1.2 million years ago,” he wrote. “Volcanoes will erupt again in the rift in the future.”

According to information from Bauer, there is roughly a 1 percent chance that a volcanic eruption could occur in New Mexico in the next 100 years and a 10 percent chance it could happen in the next 1,000 years. He said geologists should have a good chance of forewarning such an event.

Bauer said the volcanoes and lava flows are key to understanding the landscape around the Río Grande del Norte, as they even changed the way water flows in and around the monument.

“It is likely that prior to eruption of the volcanoes, streams did run from the Tusas Mountains to the Río Grande,” he wrote. “In addition, the volcanic rocks of the monument tend to be extensively and pervasively fractured, such that rain and snowmelt percolate down into the rocks rather than flowing across the surface.”

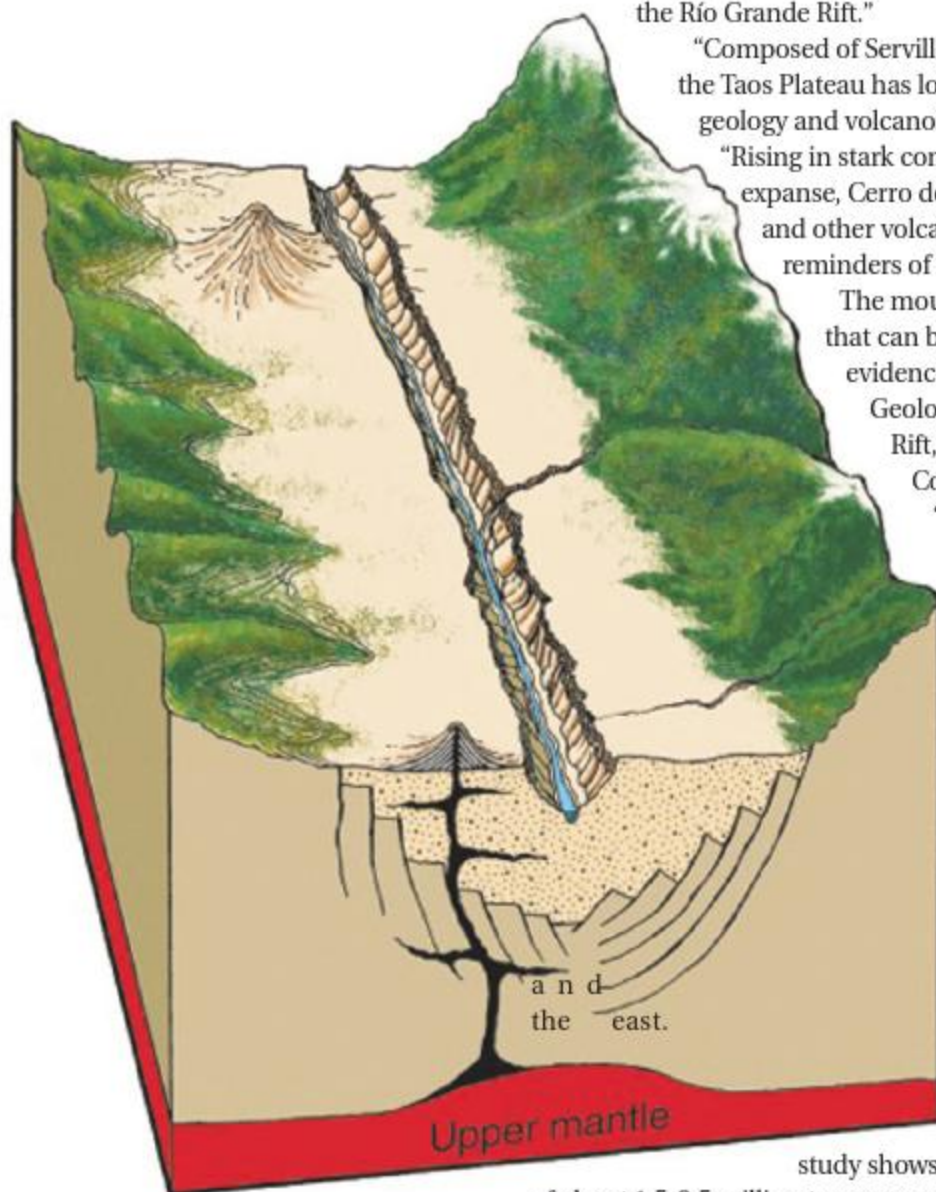
Bauer said the Río Grande del Norte National Monument is located in “one of the few young continental rifts on the planet.”

“Continental rifts have created some of the most dynamic and thought-provoking geologic settings on the planet, as well as hosting some of its most spectacular landscapes,” he wrote in an email to *The Taos News*. “The rift is responsible for the amazing variety of young volcanoes and lava flows that characterize the area, and for the big earthquakes that have ruptured the land surface along a fantastically complicated zone of faults. The rift also controls the location and gradient of the river. And the world-class aquifers that underlie the Río Grande exist because of the rift, as do the marvelous springs.”

Bauer described the rift as a “long, extensional fracture” in the Earth’s crust, “in which the center has down dropped (for 30 million years) and filled with sediment and volcanoes.” He said continental rifts are characterized by a thin crust and “high heat flow,” which leads to a lot of magma below the rift, which in turn leads to volcanic eruptions.

“And, because the crust is broken by faults, the magmas have easy conduits to ascend and erupt at the surface,” he wrote. “So rifts and faults and volcanoes all go together.”

Ragland contrasted the larger rift with the Río Grande Gorge, which was carved out by the river. She and Benson both said the gorge began to be formed 440,000 years ago. Ragland said the ancient Lake Alamosa in current-day Colorado “overtopped its natural dam” and filled the ancient Lake Sunshine in New Mexico. Lake Sunshine then dumped water into the ancestral Río Grande,



Courtesy image

This illustration depicts how the river follows the lowest points in the rift basin, and how both the rift and river will continue to deepen and evolve into the future.



Geraint Smith

Ute Mountain, at right, is an andesite volcano buried by Servilleta basalt, over which a dacite lava dome formed. It is also the highest point in the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, at 10,100 feet above sea level.

Ragland said, shifting its headwaters from Red River to Colorado.

The Río Grande flows along the lowest path within the rift, and Benson said the deep gorge formed because tilted topographical features “concentrate the river flow.” He said the Río Grande also cut rather easily into faults.

“The river follows a number of faults,” he said. “The faults are pretty highly fractured.”

According to information from Ragland, “Deepened canyons formed as the high volume of water filled the new, larger river system, and as the gentler downstream gradient and steeper upstream gradient try to equalize.”

Bauer said deep river canyons develop “under certain combinations of geologic circumstance,” including the river being capable of rapidly eroding and transporting large volumes of rock and debris and the geology of the canyon walls being strong enough to form steep cliffs.

Ragland said the rift’s most active volcanic period was 2 to 5 million years ago, when its volcanoes came into being. According to Bauer’s river guide, “The Río Grande,” Cerro de la Olla is 4.97

million years old, San Antonio Mountain 3 million and Ute Mountain, the highest point in the National Monument at nearly 10,100 feet, 2.7 million years old.

The Cerros del Norte Conservation Act would create a 13,420-acre wilderness around Ute Mountain, which Ragland described as a “dome of rather sturdy lava.” According to information from Ragland, Ute Mountain consists of an andesite volcano buried by Servilleta basalt, over which a dacite lava dome formed.

But one need not look up to observe the Taos Plateau’s volcanic history. The Río Grande Gorge is also rich with evidence of ancient water and lava flows. Ragland said one can look into the gorge and see sedimentary beds between lava flows — an indication of rivers and streams that flowed across lava flows, depositing sand and pebbles before being covered by another lava flow.

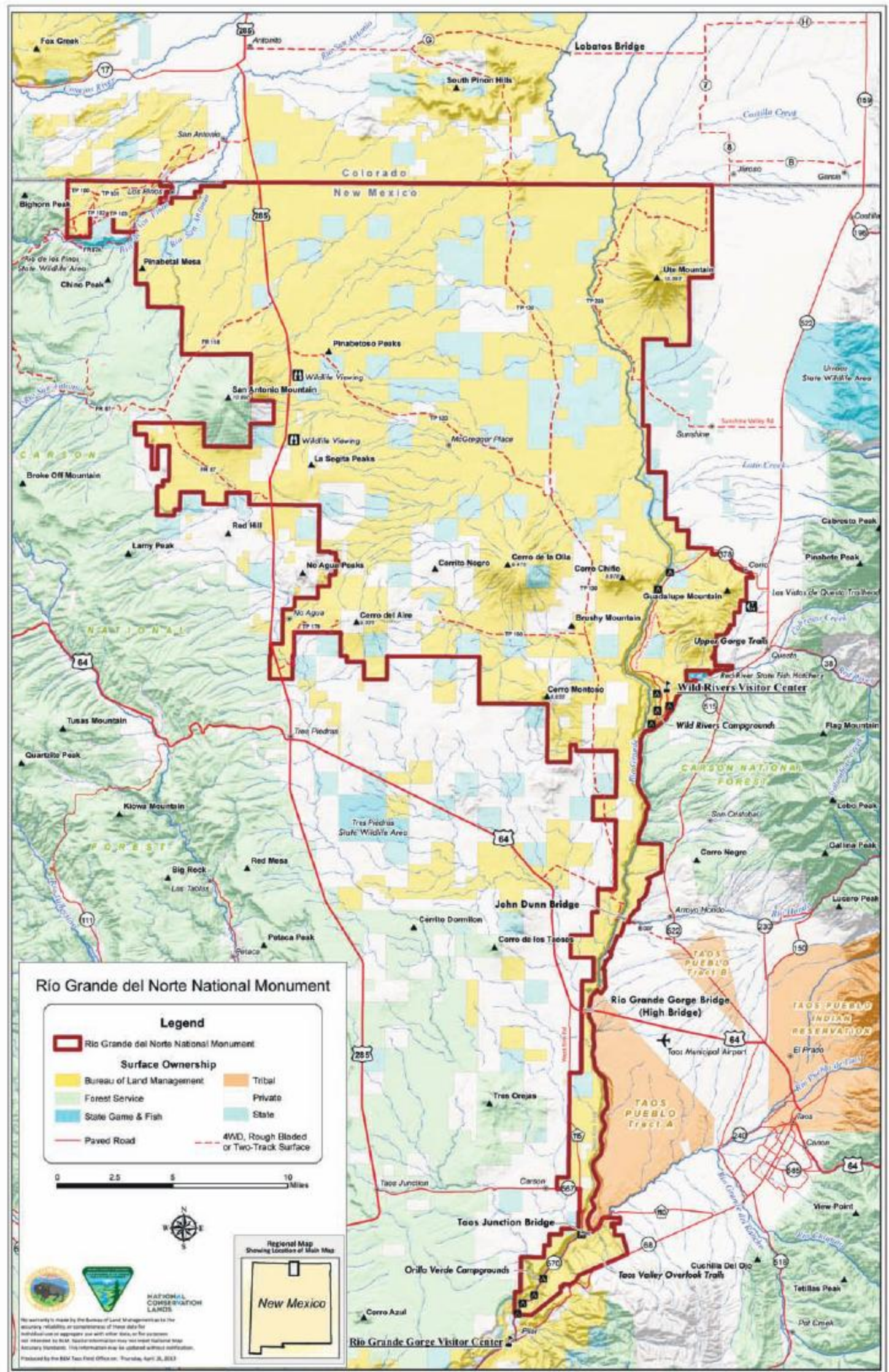
“It’s like a moment in time,” she said.

Though much effort has been put into studying the area, Ragland said there is still a lot to learn.

“There have been moderate amounts of study,” Ragland said. “There is much more work to be done.”

MAPPING A MONUMENT

The Río Grande del Norte National Monument spans from the Colorado/New Mexico border, along the Río Grande to just north of Pilar. And from the Río de los Pinos State Wildlife area in the far northwest to the easternmost point of Guadalupe Mountain, just northwest of Questa.



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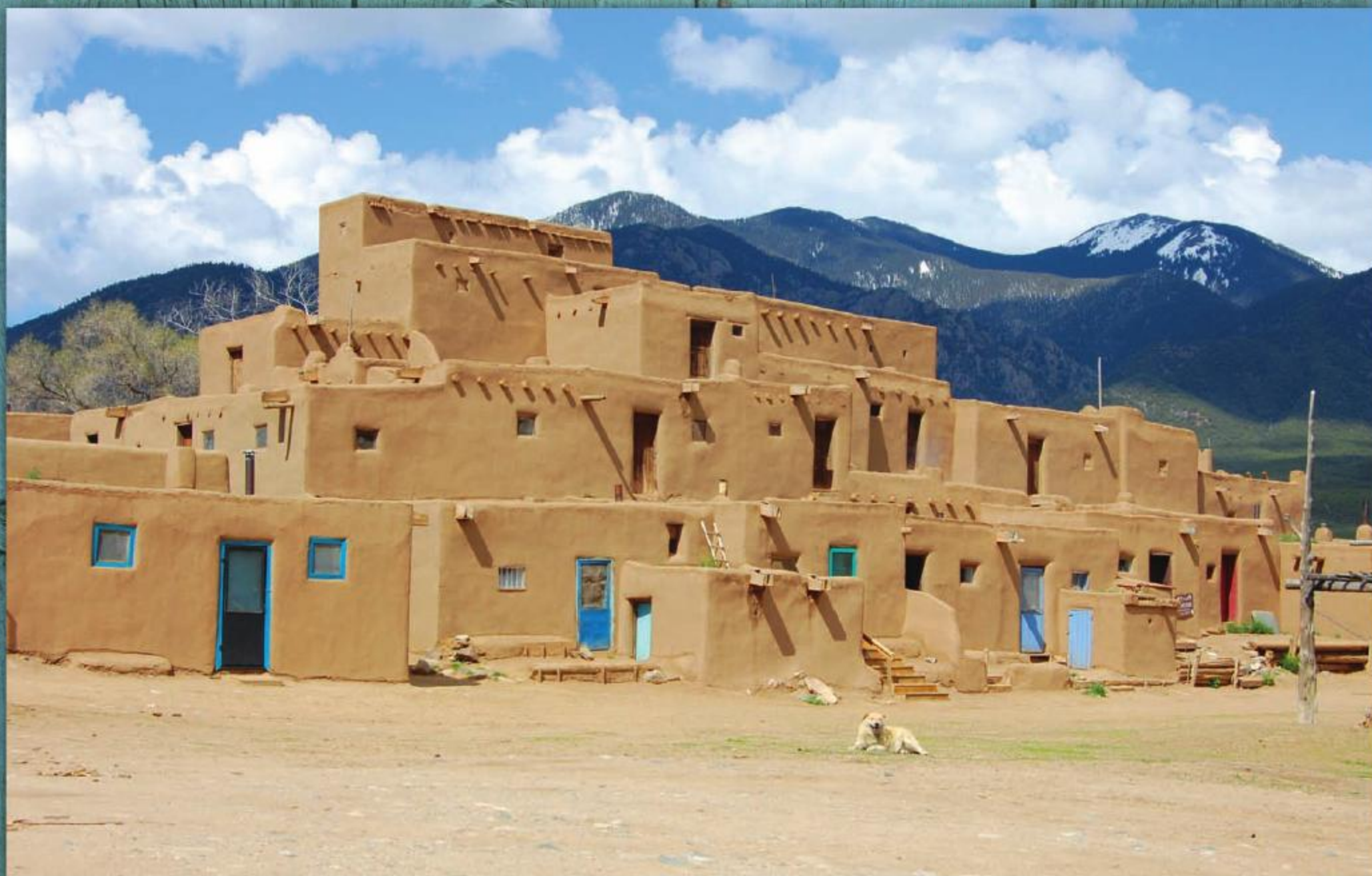
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