

From National Register District to National Monument: The Past Ten Years on Perry Mesa

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Introduction

Perry Mesa was featured at the first Prescott Archaeological Conference in 1996. For decades, archaeologists had been intrigued by this windswept, grassy mesa filled with prehistoric pueblos and petroglyphs. Although the area also attracted multitudes of vandals and artifact collectors, it retained a great potential for scientific research. A year before the conference, archaeologists from the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Tonto National Forest articulated a vision for the “desired future condition” of the Agua Fria Grasslands, an ecosystem encompassing Perry Mesa.

Cultural resources are actively protected and managed for their scientific and educational values. Selected archaeological sites are developed for public visitation and interpreted to explain how humans have used and modified the Agua Fria Grasslands over the past several thousand years (Bureau of Land Management 1995:2).

Ten years ago at the Prescott Conference, I reported on cooperative efforts by the BLM, the Tonto National Forest, and our partners to study and protect the archaeological sites on Perry Mesa (Stone 2000). At that time, we intended to continue those efforts, in spite of agency boundaries and limited resources.

Little did we imagine what would happen by the turn of the millennium. Perry Mesa was to become a symbol for a new vision of public lands management. In early January of 2000, President Bill Clinton stood at the rim of the Grand Canyon to proclaim much of the area as the Agua Fria National Monument. From that point on, Perry Mesa was thrust into the national limelight and would never be the same. This article provides a brief review of archaeological projects before 2000, a history of the national monument designation, and an update on our efforts in the monument from 2000 through 2006.

The Perry Mesa National Register District

The designation of the Perry Mesa Archaeological District in 1974 expressed the official realization that this area had special significance. At that time, the BLM administered only a few thousand acres on Perry Mesa and Black Mesa. The vast majority of the territory, outside of the Tonto National Forest, consisted of State Trust lands. Demonstrating great foresight, an outdoor recreation planner in the Phoenix District compiled the information needed to list the Perry Mesa Archaeological District on the

National Register of Historic Places. This unsung hero undoubtedly relied on information from early archaeological studies. Perry Mesa may have been one of his favorite destinations for a day of fieldwork, a feeling still shared by current BLM employees.

J. W. Simmons, an avocational archaeologist from Prescott, was one of the first explorers to recognize the significance of the archaeological sites on Perry Mesa. During the 1930's, he visited and documented many of the large pueblos while he worked for the Federal Writers' Project, a program to fund written work and support writers during the Great Depression (Christenson 2004).

Over the following decades, archaeologists came to realize that the undeveloped expanses of Perry Mesa contain one of the best-preserved settlement systems of late prehistoric sites in the Southwest. Several thousand years of human use are dominated by the communities of the late prehistoric period, between A.D. 1275 and 1450, which we call the Perry Mesa Tradition. The archaeological record is a classic example of phenomena that were widespread in central Arizona during the 13th through 15th centuries. Populations moved away from valleys to upland areas, where groups aggregated into relatively large pueblo villages and devoted considerable attention to defensive needs as well as long-distance trade. On Perry Mesa, hundreds of archaeological sites exist within a distinctive natural landscape.

Although it is largely remote and inaccessible, this landscape is a familiar sight to Arizonans. Many travelers are familiar with the steep climb from Black Canyon City to the Sunset Point Rest Area on Interstate Highway 17. About 40 miles north of Phoenix, Sunset Point offers a view of the Bradshaw Mountains to the west, with Black Mesa and Perry Mesa to the east. The extensive grasslands and plateaus of the mesas are separated by the narrow, deep canyon of the Agua Fria River. A drive down Interstate 17, a few miles south of Cordes Junction, offers a fine vista of the mesas, the river canyon, and the ancient volcano of Joe's Hill. Better yet, commercial flight paths between Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas afford aerial views that confirm the unique character of these landforms. In wet years, the pueblos stand out as gray spots against the green background of the mesa tops.

The mesa vistas also include 500 kilovolt transmission lines, marching across the landscape. Pure science and power lines brought archaeologists to Perry Mesa in the 1960's and 1970's. Peter Pilles recorded sites near the foothills at the eastern edge of the mesa. With Joe Katich, he excavated portions of the Olla Negra rockshelter, which yielded prehistoric, Yavapai, and perishable materials (Pilles and Katich 1967). Archaeologists from the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) also recorded many sites on the mesas, and from 1970 through 1975, the MNA completed surveys in advance of the construction of major power lines (Fiero et. al. 1980; Fish et. al. 1975).

The Central Arizona Ecotone Project, a research effort conducted by the original Prescott College and Southern Illinois University in the mid-1970's, recorded more than

100 sites on Perry Mesa. The CAEP project examined the prehistoric settlement systems and cultural ecology of three environmental zones, ranging from the low deserts of the Salt River Valley to the “mesa-canyon complex” of Perry Mesa (Gumerman et. al. 1976; Spoerl and Gumerman 1984).

By the early 1980’s, the BLM had taken note of these studies and the observations of its own archaeologists, as well as those of biologists who emphasized the exceptional character of the area’s natural resources. In addition, a local legal case had highlighted the need to protect these threatened cultural and natural resources. Publicity surrounding the 1977 case against Jones, Jones, and Gevara, who were caught illegally excavating a prehistoric site on Perry Mesa in the Tonto National Forest, created support for the enactment of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) in 1979. As an interesting side note, this case launched the career of Martin McAllister, then the Tonto Forest Archaeologist, who later became the guru of resource protection through the implementation of ARPA.

The BLM initiated efforts to acquire the state lands in the Perry Mesa area, to bring them under long-term federal protection. In the meantime, the existing federal lands were designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern that deserved special management attention.

By 1990, the BLM succeeded in acquiring the state lands. Staff from the BLM and the Tonto National Forest began cooperative efforts to study and protect the cultural resources of the mesas and canyons. These efforts included a vandalism study, which produced maps of the architecture and history of vandalism at several pueblos (Ahlstrom et. al. 1992). The agencies funded a comprehensive cultural resources overview of Perry Mesa prehistory, in support of the effort to expand the Perry Mesa National Register District to approximately 50,000 acres (Ahlstrom and Roberts 1994). The cooperative studies also included a sample survey of 1,170 acres, which included long transects across Perry Mesa from end to end (Heuett and Long 1996). In 1994, the BLM recommended the Agua Fria River as suitable for designation to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, by virtue of its outstanding cultural, scenic, and biological values (Bureau of Land Management 1994).

The mid-1990’s produced a successful ARPA prosecution against a pair of artifact thieves, caught in the act at Pueblo Pato by visitors from the Prescott Yavapai Tribe. However, the pace of the interagency efforts slowed during the late 1990’s. The emphasis shifted toward a trio of intrepid investigators—Dr. David Wilcox of the MNA, J. Scott Wood of the Tonto National Forest, and Gerald Robertson, Jr. of the Verde Valley Archaeological Society. These investigators completed extensive surveys and detailed studies to examine a Perry Mesa settlement system that may have been “organized for war” (Wilcox, Robertson, and Wood 2001). Their approach featured the area’s exceptional potential for cultural landscape research. In 1999, they published an article in *Plateau Journal*, a popular publication of the MNA, titled “Perry Mesa, A Fourteenth-Century Gated Community in Central Arizona” (Wilcox, Robertson, and Wood 1999).

The article's intriguing ideas and beautiful photographs captured the attention of a certain resident of Washington, D.C., who recognized the area as a place that he had enjoyed hiking while in Arizona.

The Agua Fria National Monument

At the time of the first Prescott Conference in May of 1996, national monuments were areas administered by the National Park Service. Later that year in September, President Clinton stood at the south rim of the Grand Canyon to proclaim the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah, under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906. In a major and controversial departure from the usual agency roles with the Department of the Interior, this new monument was to be administered and managed by the BLM.

Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of the Interior under Clinton and a former governor of Arizona, supported this dramatic shift in the role of the BLM.

The Antiquities Act became the primary vehicle for presidential leadership in expanding our national park system. With these precedents, it was no surprise that President Clinton would make use of the Antiquities Act, but this time it was for something new--creating a system of conservation lands that would be administered by the BLM (Babbitt 2005:162).

Babbitt emphasized that the public lands encompassed a rich legacy of cultural resources within extensive landscapes and ecosystems.

It was time, I thought, to recognize that we were protecting landscapes, not making parks. And that it would be crucially important to encourage the BLM to develop a conservation mission—something unlikely to occur if every new monument carved out of existing public lands were taken away from the BLM and given to the Park Service...Notably, these monuments were not intended to be national parks with highly developed visitor facilities. The purpose of these new monuments was to assert, unequivocally, the primacy of public values on these landscapes, precluding uses that would impair the natural values of the land. But we would not automatically exclude traditional uses such as hunting and grazing, so long as they were managed consistently with the overriding purpose of preserving and restoring the natural systems (Babbitt 2005:166-167).

In 1999, President Clinton asked Secretary Babbitt to offer recommendations for more places worthy of designation as new national monuments. Henri Bisson, a high-level BLM official who had served as manager of the Phoenix District, urged Babbitt to consider the Perry Mesa area, which had been one of Bisson's favorite areas for hiking and hunting. Babbitt needed little urging; as a native of Arizona, he had also spent time hiking on Perry Mesa and had served as governor while the BLM was deciding to acquire the state lands there.

Early in 1999, a few employees at the Phoenix District Office were asked to write summary descriptions of the significant cultural and natural resources on Perry Mesa. We knew only that these requests came from a mysterious, important official in Washington, D.C., with associated rumors of possible designation as a national monument. The rumors became more credible when Bruce Babbitt visited Phoenix for a Perry Mesa hike, which was postponed after a monsoon storm drenched the mesa. This was consistent with a law of nature that any major event, planned on Perry Mesa, will be rained out. At a reception, Babbitt praised the *Plateau Journal* article and enjoyed discussing it with Gerald Robertson, a Vietnam War veteran who had contributed his knowledge of military science. A few months later, Babbitt returned for a hike. It rained again, causing a last-minute change in location, which was a problem only for those wearing loafers instead of hiking boots.

The *Arizona Republic* newspaper and other local advocates, such as Dr. Keith Kintigh who was serving a term as president of the Society for American Archaeology, supported the establishment of a new national monument. In early January of 2000, President Clinton returned to the rim of the Grand Canyon to proclaim two new monuments—the Agua Fria National Monument and the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument in northern Arizona (The White House 2000). Kathy Pedrick, an archaeologist, was named as the first manager of the Agua Fria, and I was privileged to serve as its first archaeologist.

The National Geographic Society later interviewed Babbitt about why the Agua Fria was selected for national monument designation.

From Bruce Babbitt's point of view, many existing national parks and monuments were much smaller than they needed to be... Those same ideas guided Babbitt's thinking about areas rich in archaeological sites--the human environment. "We don't learn about ancient cultures just by digging out a room and finding a few pots," he says. "Ancient people lived in equilibrium with their entire landscape." He has an example at hand: Agua Fria, just 40 miles from Phoenix. Hundreds of prehistoric sites and spectacular petroglyphs help make Agua Fria one of the most important treasures of ancient southwestern life. But it's the landscape that completes the story of a community fighting to protect itself on high natural ramparts, locating its watchtowers in a defensive array across nearly 100,000 acres. "It is one of the most complicated, challenging, natural, and human landscapes you can imagine, and right next door to Phoenix," says Babbitt (Allen 2002:167-168).

Cultural Resource Management in the Agua Fria NM, 2000-2006

From the inception of the Agua Fria National Monument, we've focused our efforts on resource monitoring and protection; surveys and site documentation; support for scientific research; public education and interpretation; public partnerships; and the development of a resource management plan.

Monitoring and Protection

The publicity surrounding the new monument heightened the visibility and vulnerability of its archaeological sites. Aside from offering public tours to a few sites during Arizona Archaeology Awareness Month, we had attempted to keep site locations confidential. Secrecy became more difficult to maintain as published hiking guides, magazine articles, and websites provided directions to sites.

Shortly after the monument designation, illegal excavations occurred at a prehistoric pueblo and a historic cabin. Whether by accident or intent, someone knocked down a wall inside Pueblo la Plata. In one case, the culprits were apprehended but not prosecuted; hopefully, their encounter with law enforcement rangers scared them straight. Since then, we've had no major cases of site vandalism. Thoughtless vandals have chalked up and shot at a few petroglyphs. We also encounter the occasional screen or digging tool near a site.

We've stepped up the level of protection through patrols and monitoring by a full-time park ranger, law enforcement rangers, site stewards, and other volunteers. Volunteers from the Arizona Site Steward Program regularly monitor the condition of 15 to 20 sites. The various owners and employees of the Horseshoe Ranch, whose grazing allotment is on Perry Mesa, have provided additional eyes on the landscape, after hosting a training session by the Site Steward Program in the mid-1990's. From 1993 to 2003, the BLM reimbursed the costs of fuel for surveillance flights by volunteer pilots from the Civil Air Patrol. Unfortunately, this partnership ended when the underlying Memorandum of Understanding expired and was not renewed by the Washington headquarters of the U.S. Air Force.

The Arizona Archaeological Society and the Site Steward Program donated carsonite sign posts with decals that offer information on cultural heritage values, site monitoring, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. These posts were installed at 20 sites, so as to provide protection without attracting undue attention. The BLM also has installed barriers to restrict vehicle traffic at Pueblo la Plata and Badger Springs Wash.

Vandalism, away from sites, remains a problem in the national monument. The few facilities that we've installed—signs, kiosks, and a couple of restrooms bordered by rock walls—are routinely stolen and defaced. Thus far, site damage from off-highway vehicles has not been a serious problem. The rocky surfaces and rugged terrain of the mesas and canyons discourage vehicles from traveling cross-country away from existing routes, which is forbidden by the monument proclamation. Yet the protection of archaeological sites and visitor facilities will continue to be a growing challenge, as urban growth in the Phoenix and Prescott areas propels more visitors toward the national monument in search of scenery, open spaces, recreation, and mischief.

Surveys and Site Documentation

The monument boundaries encompass 71,100 acres, but systematic archaeological surveys have covered less than 10% of the area. Shortly after the monument designation, we were fortunate to acquire funding for a survey that was contracted to SWCA Environmental Consultants. We wanted to examine a block of territory in order to document the spatial distribution, environmental contexts, and interrelationships among a wide range of site types. We selected the northern part of Black Mesa, between Sunset Canyon on the south and Badger Springs Wash on the north. This area included sizeable pueblos, agricultural features, prehistoric “race track” features, and sites of the historic period that were associated with the Richinbar Mine. A recent prescribed burn had enhanced the visibility of the surface. Under the direction of Chris North, SWCA completed a survey of 1,230 acres on Black Mesa, as well as 160 acres along Ash Creek in the northern part of the monument. The project also produced detailed maps of the Badger Springs and Richinbar pueblos (North 2002).

In addition, BLM crews began to inventory areas around Pueblo la Plata and along the Agua Fria River between Bloody Basin Road and Cordes Junction. Volunteers conducted surveys for rock art localities on Black Mesa and on Perry Mesa along Baby Canyon, Perry Tank Canyon, and Lousy Canyon. Joe Vogel found and photographed known and new sites from his small airplane, in support of research projects by David Wilcox and Scott Wood. Additional, targeted surveys have taken place in conjunction with various research projects.

Site documentation is a critical step to support protection and research. Volunteers from the Arizona Archaeological Society and the Deer Valley Rock Art Center have braved the elements to produce detailed maps and records of the monument’s spectacular rock art sites. With great enthusiasm, they’ve endured extreme temperatures, snakes, biting gnats, barbed wire fences, thorns of cactus and catclaw, steep slopes without trails, and rocky surfaces that easily turn ankles. One team was stranded for days in the Tonto National Forest, when a spring storm hit Perry Mesa.

Their efforts began in 1993, when the Arizona Archaeological Society (AAS) began to record the large Arrastre Creek site on Black Mesa, under the direction of Grace Schoonover. The Desert Foothills Chapter raised the funds to publish the final report (Schoonover 2003). Also on Black Mesa, AAS volunteers recorded the petroglyphs at the Badger Springs site and the Hidden Bird site (Gronemann 2002, 2003). Two volunteers continued to record numerous sites on Black Mesa, in the process developing the “DigitalRockArt” database, using efficient recording techniques based on digital photography. Agua Fria NM volunteers are active in the newly formed Arizona Rock Art Coalition, whose members meet regularly to develop more efficient and effective techniques for rock art recording and analysis.

In 2003, the monument began a partnership with the Deer Valley Rock Art Center, a facility of Arizona State University (ASU). We were granted our request for “challenge cost share” funding, which requires a matching contribution of volunteer labor or in-kind support. We began to scout the monument to identify a suitable site for a large

recording project. We settled on Baby Canyon Pueblo, at which we estimated about 40 rock art panels. The Rock Art Center hired Jennifer Huang, an ASU graduate student, to be the project director. The Horseshoe Ranch graciously provided lodging at its guest house at a very reasonable price. The chance to stay at this beautiful place, next to the Agua Fria River, was an appreciated “perk” for the field crews.

Almost 30 volunteers participated in the Baby Canyon Pueblo project, from the initial reconnaissance through the fieldwork, analysis, and completion of the final report. During four weeks of fieldwork over three field sessions, the crew mapped and recorded more than 230 panels. So much for that initial estimate! The volunteers contributed more than 2,500 hours of service. The final report will soon be produced for public distribution (Huang, Stone, and Welsh 2005). The Deer Valley Rock Art Center is continuing to record and study petroglyph sites in the Baby Canyon area.

Support for Scientific Research

The Antiquities Act authorized the establishment of national monuments to protect “objects of scientific interest.” I’m pleased to report that the monument since has generated enough scientific interest, and some funding, to support research projects that will contribute to our knowledge of the Perry Mesa Tradition and the prehistory of central Arizona and the greater Southwest.

In 2003, the BLM established a partnership with the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) and Northern Arizona University (NAU) to carry out the Pueblo la Plata Mapping Project. Dr. David Wilcox of the MNA directed the project, assisted by Dr. Chris Downum and Dr. Kelley Hays-Gilpin of NAU. Pueblo la Plata, which contains 80 to 100 rooms, is a relatively accessible site that the BLM has proposed for future interpretive development. Detailed documentation is a necessary first step, prior to developing and implementing an interpretive plan.

The project involved low-level aerial photography and detailed architectural mapping of the pueblo walls, completed by James Holmlund and his crew from Western Mapping Services. With the assistance of volunteers from the Verde Valley Archaeological Society, Wilcox also produced a detailed map of diagnostic artifacts and features around the main room block. The crew collected a sample of diagnostic pottery types and obsidian from the surface of the site, for safekeeping and analysis. With obsidian samples collected from La Plata and other sites, the Center for Desert Archaeology contributed a source analysis by Dr. Steve Shackley from the University of California at Berkeley. Sources in the Flagstaff and Williams areas accounted for more than 95% of the samples.

Wilcox worked with Hays-Gilpin and Dr. Patrick Lyons, then with the Center for Desert Archaeology, to analyze the polychrome and Hopi Yellow Ware pottery types from Pueblo la Plata, as well as those in existing museum collections from Perry Mesa and Black Mesa. Hays-Gilpin and her NAU students produced a descriptive summary and identification guide, to be posted as a reference tool on the MNA website.

The final report for the Pueblo la Plata Mapping Project is much more than a descriptive treatment of a single site. It addresses Perry Mesa as a cultural landscape, linked to other regions through social and political connections that may have formed the basis of confederacies (Wilcox 2005). The report presents a regional synthesis that supports an updated refinement of David Wilcox's ideas about the Perry Mesa settlement system, with a review of competing theories about how it was organized for war or was ecologically degrading its landscape. The report is currently being prepared for publication (Wilcox and Holmlund 2007, in press).

Arizona State University recently began an innovative research project called "Legacies on the Landscape." Currently led by Dr. Katherine Spielmann, Dr. David Abbott, and Dr. John Briggs, the Legacies project is an interdisciplinary effort of professors and students from the School of Human Evolution and Social Change (formerly the Department of Anthropology) and the School of Life Sciences. Archaeologists and ecologists are working together to examine prehistoric settlement and land use during the Perry Mesa Tradition, as well as the long-term effects on the natural landscape.

Since 2003, ASU has conducted surveys and studies of archaeological sites, vegetation, soils, rock cover, and small mammal species in the areas surrounding Pueblo la Plata, Pueblo Pato, and Richinbar Pueblo. These efforts have also included architectural mapping and studies of prehistoric agricultural terraces and agave fields. The Desert Botanical Garden is assisting with the study of agave species.

The Legacies project has produced written reports, as well as posters and a symposium presented at meetings of the Society for American Archaeology (Briggs et. al. 2006, Kruse 2005, Mapes 2005, Schafssma et. al. 2006, Spielmann 2005). Dr. George Gumerman, the director of the Central Arizona Ecotone Project during the 1970's, provided comments as a discussant at a symposium presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the Society.

ASU recently was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation for a related study, "Alliance and Landscape: Perry Mesa, Arizona in the Fourteenth Century." Abbott and Spielmann (2005:1) provide the following description of the proposed research, which will add a new dimension to the Legacies study—a focus on the composition and distribution of plain ware pottery as an indicator of social interaction.

The proposed research will evaluate hypotheses concerning the scale at which conflict and alliances took place in central Arizona in the 14th century. In particular, by tracing ceramic transactions, we will investigate the local, regional, and macroregional networks of interaction among members of the proposed Verde Confederacy and between them and their postulated Hohokam enemies to the south. We will also use architectural and paleoclimatic evidence to evaluate the extent to which the local and regional settlement patterns were dictated by a defensive strategy formulated by a large-scale confederacy.

It seems that prehistoric conflict on Perry Mesa is echoed by competing theories among modern researchers. I regard this as an example of science in action, provided that productive debates support the evaluation of alternative hypotheses. Hopefully, these different perspectives will contribute to advances in knowledge, more interesting interpretation, and enhanced public understanding of the monument's values and the process of scientific inquiry.

We are also emphasizing scientific research as an aspect of rock art studies, by defining research questions within the context of landscape analysis. The Baby Canyon Pueblo report addresses relationships between the site's rock art panels and features of its natural and cultural landscape, including features that may have contributed to a defensive function. It also compares Perry Mesa petroglyph symbols to stylistic elements in surrounding areas, concluding that there is a distinctive Perry Mesa style (Huang, Stone, and Welsh 2005). Further, the Baby Canyon report begins to examine similarities and differences among the sites on Perry Mesa and Black Mesa, as one clue to patterns of social interaction among the Perry Mesa villages (Huang and Stone 2004, 2005). Huang later analyzed the spatial distribution of rock art, relating to site use and social organization within Baby Canyon Pueblo (Huang 2006). She detected intriguing patterns, which are difficult to interpret but worthy of further study.

Through our partnership with the Deer Valley Rock Art Center, with assistance from Western Mapping Services, a study in progress is applying the technology of three-dimensional laser scanning to document and analyze petroglyph panels at the Badger Springs and Arrastre Creek sites. We want to compare the costs, benefits, and accuracy of traditional recording techniques, such as string grid drawings; digital photography; and laser scanning. Laser scanning may also offer a better picture of the relative ages of petroglyphs, as one site was used over a long period of time, while the other contains symbols that were intentionally re-pecked.

Public Education and Interpretation

People are fascinated by the archaeological sites of the Agua Fria. We believe that effective public education is a way to promote a broader understanding of the irreplaceable scientific and heritage values of the monument's landscape, which will translate into long-term support for resource protection.

Since 2000, we've conducted site tours and given many public presentations about the natural and cultural resources of the Agua Fria National Monument. Shortly after the monument was established, the BLM produced a poster and a monument brochure. The poster shows a scenic view of a petroglyph figure, against the backdrop of a canyon landscape. It's a great scene, but the petroglyph looks too fresh to be ancient. For the second, expanded version of the monument brochure, we switched to a photo of a prehistoric petroglyph panel at Pueblo Pato.

To celebrate Arizona Archaeology Awareness Month in 2002, we decided to offer a public “open house” at Pueblo la Plata. We invited the AAS, Arizona Site Stewards, and other groups to set up information booths on the way to the site. I compiled interpretive information and trained a team of BLM employees and volunteers to serve as site interpreters. We gathered a large team of BLM rangers, firefighters, and other staff to manage, protect and inform the visitors. In the first hour, we had 150 visitors and more were on the way. Then, on an April morning in the middle of a long drought, a thunderstorm suddenly appeared and settled over Pueblo la Plata. There was a mass exit to escape the lightening bolts and the sea of mud. We decided the BLM wouldn’t stage another big event for quite awhile—which took us to 2006.

In 2006, the BLM celebrated the centennial of the passage of the Antiquities Act. The State Director asked the Phoenix District to host Arizona’s signature event at the Agua Fria National Monument. The Agua Fria Festival took place on October 21, 2006, featuring guided hikes, site tours, and family-oriented activities. The Horseshoe Ranch served as the central venue, featuring educational displays, demonstrations, entertainment, food, and even a birthday cake to commemorate the Antiquities Act. The festival attracted at least 1,500 visitors, who enjoyed a day of remarkably sunny weather.

Currently, we are working with a consultant, Heritage Design, to develop an interpretive plan for Pueblo la Plata. We envision a low-key approach that would incorporate walking trails, interpretive signs, and brochures with a parking area and a few benches. The first step is to develop interpretive themes and messages, and then to design a site plan that supports effective public education, while protecting the site’s features. We do not envision extensive stabilization or reconstruction. We’ve found that the majority of our visitors prefer to experience a sense of discovery at a site, rather than a highly developed tourist attraction that would conflict with scenic values.

Public Partnerships

Public partnerships have served to support our efforts in resource protection, inventories, research, and public education. As an example, nearly 100 volunteers contributed their efforts to the success of the Agua Fria Festival. In addition to the partnerships already mentioned, supporters of the monument have established a new organization, the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument. The Friends “work to protect, preserve, and promote appreciation and enjoyment of the ecological, archaeological, scenic, and scientific resources and values of the Agua Fria National Monument.” They work to accomplish this mission through volunteer projects and activities such as wildlife, archaeological, and hydrological studies; removal of invasive plant species; trash cleanups; fundraising and advocacy; and education and interpretation. Besides, they have fun at their meetings and events. I’m pleased to report that our archaeological partners and volunteers have played significant roles in founding the organization and serving on its board of directors. The organization’s website, aguafriafriends.org, offers more information on its membership and activities.

Through the past centuries, the monument has been home to people of the Hohokam Tradition, Perry Mesa Tradition, and Yavapai Tribe. The modern Hopi, O'odham, and Yavapai peoples value their cultural ties to the area and strongly support the protection of the heritage values embodied in its archaeological sites. Continuing consultations with the tribes will enable us to consider their concerns relating to protection and resource management, and to incorporate tribal perspectives into educational and interpretive programs. One objective is to obtain funding for an ethnohistoric study of Perry Mesa, which could support travel expenses and interviews of tribal elders. We will also explore opportunities to work with the tribal archaeologist and para-archaeology program of the nearby Yavapai-Prescott Tribe.

Resource Management Planning

Over the past few years, much of our time has been devoted to the preparation of a detailed resource management plan for the Agua Fria National Monument. We published a Draft Resource Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) in late 2005, followed by public meetings and a public comment period in early 2006 (Bureau of Land Management 2005). Since then, we've kept busy analyzing and preparing responses to hundreds of comments received from individuals, organizations, public officials, and government agencies. We expect to publish the final version of the RMP/EIS, which will include the public comments and responses, in the summer of 2007.

The resource management plan for the national monument emphasizes the protection of its cultural and natural resources, in accordance with the purpose of the Monument Proclamation. We propose to designate a small number of sites for interpretive development, leaving the majority off-limits to this type of use. We also are encouraging scientific research, while directing such activities toward sites that are more accessible and vulnerable to loss of information through vandalism. We also propose to close a number of routes, or to establish other limits on access, in order to protect nearby sites or sites that may have been the destinations during the heyday of pothunting activities.

The public comments on the Draft RMP expressed strong support for the protection and study of cultural resources. We also received critical comments, for example, that we should open more (or fewer) sites to interpretive development; that we would unduly restrict (or should restrict) scientific research; and that we should further restrict (or enhance) public access. We've devoted careful attention to these comments and issues, and we look forward to completing the management plan and working with our partners to implement it.

Conclusion

The past decade has brought a remarkable transformation to Perry Mesa, which has thrust it into the national limelight as one of the BLM's first national monuments--one of the few that are recognized particularly for their important archaeological resources. Little could I have imagined, at the first Prescott Archaeological Conference, I would soon be reading my own words in a proclamation signed by the President. As we

anticipate future challenges and opportunities, we appreciate the public support and look forward to working with our partners as we protect and study this national treasure.

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