



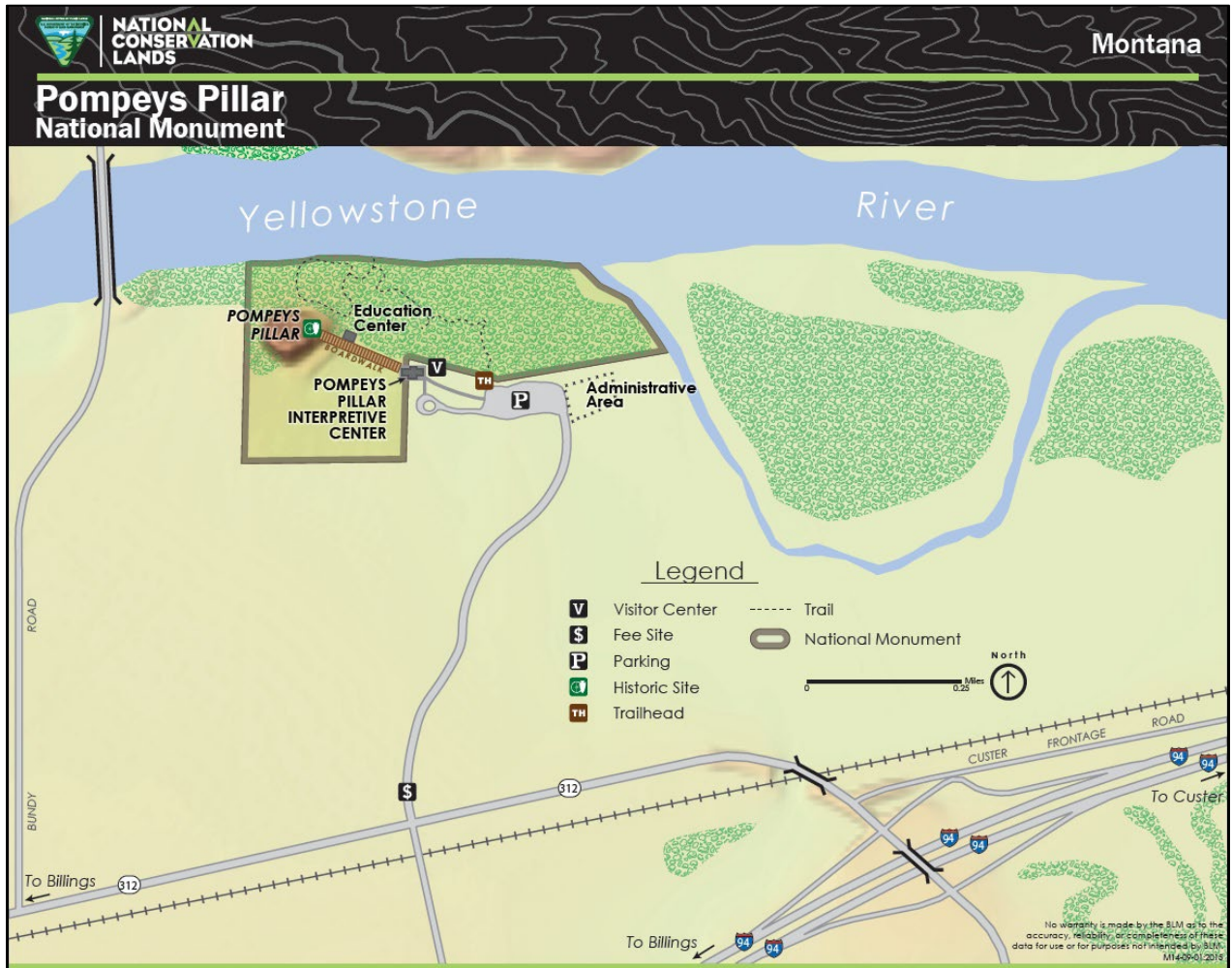
NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Montana / Dakotas
2022: Annual Manager's Report

Pompeys Pillar National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

Some noteworthy accomplishments and enhancements added this year at Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) are as follows:

- New sidewalk connection north of Pillar replaced a section destroyed by flooding in 2019.
- New carpet in the gift store and administrative area at the interpretive center.
- Newly painted 120' flagpole with new cable and winch and a new 20' x 30' U.S. flag.
- New interpretive sign: Pompeys Pillar Farm - Macer Family Legacy.
- New 15-star U.S. flag interpretive sign that explains its significance and the Lewis and Clark Expedition, courtesy of the Rochejhone Chapter Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.
- New National Register of Historic Places sign, courtesy of the Montana Historical Society – see link <https://historicmt.org/items/show/3309> located at base of Pillar.
- New ½-mile trail (Canal Trail) and trail bridge. Trail construction assistance by a Montana Conservation Corps crew.
- New trail map developed for the expanding trail system at PPNM and PPNM Area of Critical environmental Concern (ACEC).
- New fog seal and line painting in the parking lot.
- Hazard limb and tree removal from the riparian area near the hiking trails.
- Woody vegetation removal from the top of the Pillar made possible by a Montana Conservation Corps Crew.
- Russian Olive (invasive tree species) removal from riparian areas and fields.

Challenges

This season there were several challenges including major flooding in mid-June which closed the site approximately 10 days. Staff worked hard to prepare for and clean up after the flood; fortunately, damage was minimal.

One of the highest priorities here and a current challenge is to complete the rock stabilization at PPNM. The project was advertised in February 2023, and we expect to award a bid soon so that work can be completed during the summer of 2023. This is a very important and complex project and the one and only of its kind. More specific information about the project is outlined under the Science heading.

During the 2022 season, staffing was not at normal levels so work had to be prioritized. Some outreach events and programming were not offered. There were just enough employees to keep the facility open and maintained for the visiting public. The goal was for visitors not to notice the reduced staffing at the site.

Like other locations, seasonal staff are challenged with finding affordable housing for the season. The spike in rental prices in 2021 and 2022 dissuaded several candidates. The lack of affordable housing will continue to be a challenge unless temporary quarters or other solutions are found to address this issue.



Visitors

Visitors from across this country and around the world come to the Pillar to discover one of the most moving chapters in American history. Visitation at the Monument was a little lighter than expected this year but all in all it was a great season with more than 22,524 visitors. These visitors include local school groups, out of state travelers, adult groups and couples, seniors, families with children, visitors from foreign countries, and residents who often bring out-of-area visitors. The total visitation does not include those that used the ACEC adjacent to PPNM during the months of May through September. These users are typically hunters, wildlife viewers and other recreationists.



Staff continued to deliver thousands of interpretive and educational programs/talks to the visiting public. Some of these talks were offered at the Pillar, the interpretive center, along walkways and trails or at the amphitheater. This year staff offered daily formal programs which covered topics like “Who left that” (wildlife sign), “Stepping through time with Lewis and Clark,” “Lost in translation: Communication on the Expedition,” and “Barking up the wrong tree” (tree identification). A total of 237 new Junior Rangers completed the Junior Ranger activity book.

Partnerships

Throughout the year, PPNM staff worked closely with our partners and looked for opportunities to make new connections with partner organizations. This year, PPNM fostered existing relationships with our great partners including the Friends of Pompeys Pillar, NPS Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, Western Heritage Center, Rochejhone Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and Montana Conservation Corps. One highlight this year was a special visit from representatives from the NPS Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail on July 14, 2022.

These partnerships helped us broaden our understanding and enhance our ability to create more connections between our visitors and the amazing resources found at the Monument.

Science

This year the rock stabilization project moved from Phase 3, design, which was completed in May 2022, into Phase 4, construction. The stabilization work will address key areas of the sandstone formation and protect them from the effects of erosion. The project was advertised for competitive bid during the summer of 2022, but a contract was not awarded. The project was re-advertised in February 2023. Phase 4, construction, is expected to be completed in the summer of 2023. Expectations are high for this project to become a reality. The BLM – Billings Field Office conducted the Environmental Assessment concurrently for this project and it was completed March 19, 2022.



Climate Impacts

Due to a series of weather events this year, the region experienced historic flooding. Rivers and streams could not handle the combined precipitation and snow melt in mid-June. In some years, flooding occurs from normal snow melt, but this season was out of the ordinary and compares to flooding that occurred in 2011. The newly installed weather station associated with the rock block monitoring system (rock stabilization project) collects data regularly (temperature, rainfall, wind speed) and this data will be utilized for future comparisons.

Climate Resiliency

As mentioned previously, the weather station data will provide additional insight into the weather conditions at the Monument. This data will continue to be monitored. Flooding can always be anticipated due to the proximity of the Yellowstone River. One building that could be impacted by a major flood event is the Education Center built in the early 1990's.

Annual prescribed burning occurred on a portion of the 432-acre ACEC this year. The acreage is divided into units that are burned on a three-to-four-year rotation.

Social and Environmental Justice

During the season, Pompeys Pillar National Monument partners with schools from across the region and facilitates educational programs at the site. No fees are charged to students, teachers, or chaperones for these trips. Fee free days are also offered at PPNM as designated by the BLM.

Bilingual pamphlets and brochures are available to Monument visitors. The Monument collaborates with local, non-governmental groups who focus on interpretive and educational efforts for underserved communities.

Consultation with the eight Federally recognized tribes is maintained on a constant basis to ensure that proposed uses and enhancements including the recent trail expansion, rock stabilization, and boardwalk replacement are carefully analyzed with tribal viewpoints incorporated into the decision-making process.



Events

The annual Signature Day (July 25) event celebrating the anniversary of William Clark and the Corps of Discovery visit to Pompeys Pillar was filled with an array of activities for the public. The day included a sign unveiling: Pompeys Pillar Farm - Macer Family Legacy. In addition, several interpretive programs were offered including "Tastes of the Expedition," "Stepping through time with Lewis & Clark," and living history programs "Trappers" and "Black Powder Rifles." The Friends of Pompeys Pillar received an award from the Billings Chapter of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) for Historical Preservation on this day.



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Pompeys Pillar

National Monument

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Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) encompasses 51 acres on the banks of the Yellowstone River with a massive sandstone outcrop covering about 2 acres at its base and rising 120 feet high toward Montana's Big Sky. The area's premier location at a natural ford in the Yellowstone River, and the Pillar's geologic distinction as the only major sandstone formation in the area, have made the site a celebrated landmark and outstanding observation point for more than eleven thousand years of human occupation. Hundreds of markings, petroglyphs, and inscriptions left by visitors have transformed this geologic phenomenon into a living journal of the American West. A National Historic Landmark since 1965, the land was acquired by the Bureau of Land Management in 1991 and was designated as a National Monument in January 2001. There are over 432 acres of public land associated with the monument, located about 25 miles east of Billings, Montana.