



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

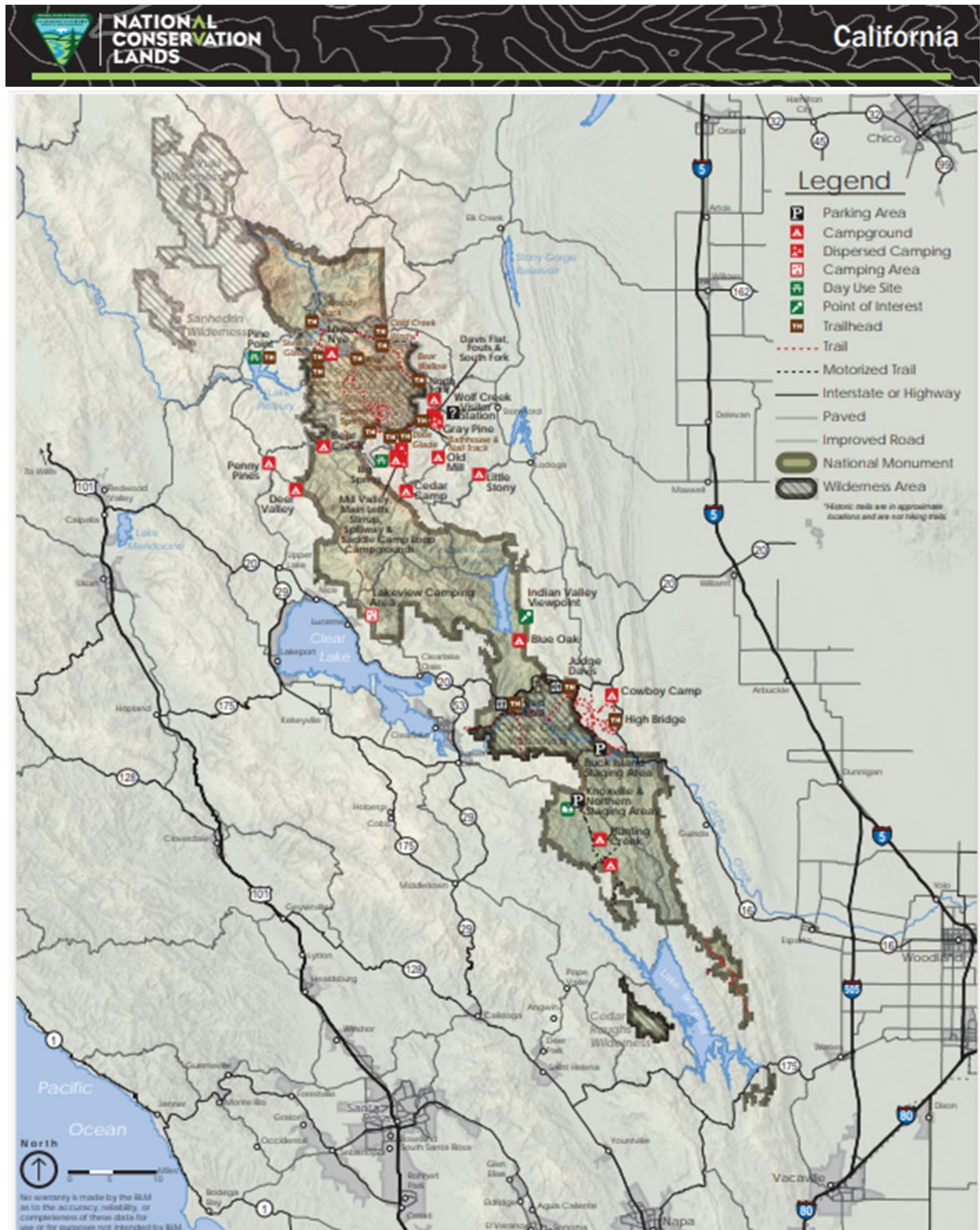
California
2023: Annual Manager's Report

Berryessa Snow Mountain

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument (BSMNM or Monument) spans 330,780 acres and is co-managed by the Bureau of Land Management under the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Ukiah Field Office and the USDA Forest Service Mendocino National Forest (USFS). The two agencies oversee 133,566 acres and 197,214 acres respectively. The accomplishments for both agencies are summarized in this report.

The region harbors many rare plant species, diverse wildlife and showcases some of the most significant geologic features visible above ocean waters. The expansive Monument holds cultural significance for several Tribes who continue to utilize the BSMNM for traditional cultural practices. This unique area offers a variety of important accomplishments, activities, partnerships, and co-stewardship efforts.



The view from Inspiration Point along the Redbud Trail. Photo: BLM

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

In 2023 the Ukiah Field Office updated the lands with wilderness characteristics inventory on the BLM portion of the Monument. Eight Wilderness Inventory Units were surveyed including Walker Ridge West and East, Indian Valley, Hough Ridge, Lodoga Peak, Blue Ridge, Rocky Ridge, and Knoxville. An inventory summary report was completed and will be utilized to inform future decision-making in a monument management plan.

Cultural Resources

The BLM continued work on an ethnographic place-based assessment in 2023. The objective of this study is to work with Tribes whose home overlaps with the Monument to leverage indigenous knowledge of sensitive Tribal resources and inform monument planning efforts. Early 20th century ethnographic maps indicate the Patwin Tribes have the largest geographic connection to the Monument and the Koi Nation, Elem Pomo, Middletown Rancheria, and Grindstone Rancheria are also connected to the Monument. In late May the BLM and Chronicle Heritage hosted an introductory meeting at the Redbud Trail. Several Tribes were in attendance and ethnographers were able to schedule interviews. The first interview took place in late August and was accompanied by several field visits. This ethnographic assessment will complement the BSMNM Class I Cultural Resources Overview completed in 2018.



Tribal Members, staff from Chronicle Heritage and BLM staff meet at the Redbud Trailhead. Photo: BLM

Vegetation

The BLM continued to utilize a valued partnership with local sheep ranchers from Kaos Sheep Outfit to control invasive annual weeds and grasses and reduce fire fuels production in several locations throughout the Monument.

The Mendocino National Forest completed prescribed burning, piling, and thinning operations on 248 acres of land within the Monument.

Both the BLM and the USFS collected native seed throughout the Monument. Seed collection efforts for the USFS focused on rust-resistant sugar pine. This seed is important for the pine propagation program with the Mendocino National Forest. BLM native seed collections continued through the Seeds of Success program. Seed collection focused on species that occur in the Indian Valley Management Area and the collected seeds will be utilized in future restoration efforts.

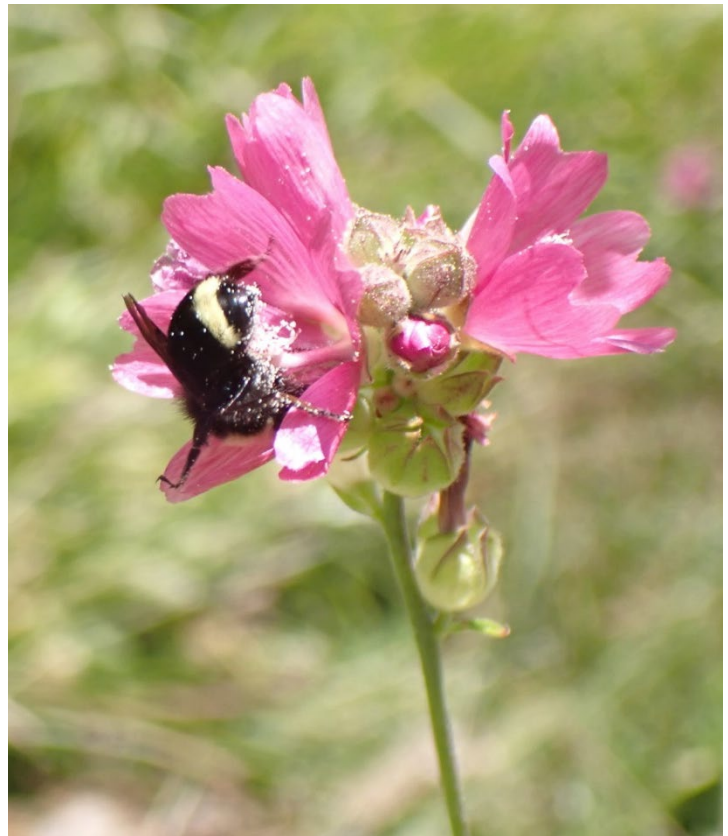


Sheep begin their grazing efforts near the Judge Davis Trailhead. Photo: Kaos Sheep Outfit

Wildlife

The BLM and USFS continued to monitor sensitive species throughout the Monument. The USFS worked with the North American Bat Conservancy to install bat detectors in Deer Valley Meadow and conducted Northern Spotted Owl surveys along the M6 Road where one owl was detected aurally.

The USFS and the BLM worked with the Xerces Society to support the California Bumble Bee Atlas and Monarch Joint Venture to survey for pollinators in the BSMNM.



A bat detector in a meadow and a bumblebee on a checkermallow on the Mendocino National Forest. Photo: USFS

Planning

In September 2023 Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument was given Interim Monument Management Directives which outlined several deliverables that included submission of a Preparation Plan for development of a Monument Management Plan. The Preparation Plan was submitted to BLM Headquarters in January 2024.

A bill proposing an expansion of BSMNM to include certain Federal land in Lake County, currently referred to as, Walker Ridge, was proposed in the House and Senate in 2023. The proposed legislation includes the renaming of the area known as “Walker Ridge” to “Molok Luyuk”, meaning Condor Ridge in the Patwin language.

In September, Congressman Mike Thompson (CA-4-D), Congressman John Garamendi (CA-8-R), Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, and BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning visited the proposed expansion area. A round-table discussion followed their visit and provided both Congressmen, the Secretary, and the BLM Director an opportunity to hear directly from Tribes. In December, Tribal, local government and public meetings were held in Woodland, CA, and attended by BLM Deputy Director Nada Wolff Culver and Wade McMaster, USDA Forest Service Mendocino National Forest Supervisor.



A group photo after the roundtable meeting at the Blue Ridge Barn. Photo: BLM

Challenges

Staffing is a challenge due to multiple socio-economic pressures, including the area's high cost of living. The Monument has no dedicated staff aside from the monument manager. Staffing and funding issues generate a myriad of challenges throughout the Monument, including an increase in unauthorized camping, proliferation of unauthorized social trails in off-highway vehicle (OHV) management areas and an increase in illegal dumping. Despite these challenges the Field Office utilized partnerships with the State of California OHV Grant Division to hire two career seasonal OHV park rangers with help from funding from the State of California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division's Grants Program. Visitor use issues related to unauthorized OHV use continued but was curtailed in some locations with installation of signage and barriers. The park rangers were also able to install an interpretive kiosk along Walker Ridge that encouraged riders to stay on designated roads and trails.



Trespass OHV recreation impacts in a rare serpentine wet meadow. Photo: BLM

Visitors

The Monument had 381,834 visits in 2023. The Monument has seen increased visitation since the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly recreationists seeking opportunities for OHV use. Other popular recreational activities within the Monument included botanizing, hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing. Partners hosted several guided hikes throughout the Monument, including wildflower hikes within the Indian Valley Management Area, and several trail rehabilitation volunteer workdays.



A hiker uses his phone to take pictures of sheep grazing on nonnative annual grasses and yellow starthistle. Photo: Tuleyome

Partnerships

Partners continued to help provide opportunities for the public to experience the Monument in many different capacities as well as help to protect Monument Objects and Values by restoring and improving trails in several locations. Tuleyome, a nonprofit conservation organization, completed a large-scale road restoration project in the Knoxville Management Area and improved access to the Hunting Creek Campground. They also led several hikes including a few trail workdays in cooperation with the UC Davis Stebbins Cold Canyon Preserve and led hikes with Scout Troops and the Hispanic Access Foundation. Tuleyome continues to be a major partner for the Monument and their work with the community and within the Monument is invaluable.



Members of the Fuente de Vida Eterna on a hike hosted by the Hispanic Access Foundation and Tuleyome. Photo: Tuleyome

Science

Vegetation mapping efforts continued throughout the Monument to support the State of California Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program referred to as VegCAMP. These efforts will map all vegetation within the State down to the plant alliance level and will greatly support future planning efforts. The Cultural Program worked with Sonoma State University to continue further refining the predictive model that helps to identify cultural sites throughout the Monument.



A fire scarred blue oak tree. Photo: Tuleyome

Climate Impacts

Climate change impacts are visible throughout the Monument as approximately 98% of the Monument has burned within the last 10 years. In 2023, the Monument experienced a break from the climate change influenced fires but received above average rainfall and an incredibly warm summer. These weather events and temperatures influenced a large increase in weeds populations throughout the Monument. Climate impacts will continue to influence weed infestations and invasive species that affect native plant communities. Careful management of weeds and invasive species is needed to help protect the rare and unique plant species within the Monument.



After heavy rains in 2023 there was a large non-native annual grass crop. Photo: Tuleyome

Social and Environmental Justice

In 2023, BLM staff continued to further Tribal relationships and entered into a co-stewardship agreement with the Koi Nation to steward a magnesite mine within the Monument, a valuable and important Traditional resource. In addition, discussions continued with three Patwin Tribes, Yocha Dehe, Cachil Dehe, and Kletzel Dehe on a co-stewardship agreement for Molok Luyuk, currently known as Walker Ridge within the Indian Valley Management Area. Part of the Patwin Tribes' ancestral territory, this area is proposed for inclusion in the Monument through two expansion petitions submitted to Congress and to the President of the United States by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.



Vice Tribal Chair and Cultural Specialists of the Koi Nation. Photo: BLM



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