

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Cultural Resources Program Highlights

BLM Colorado Fiscal Year 2025



Mission statement

The Bureau of Land Management sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Cover Photo

Historic cabin along the Alpine Loop, Colorado
Photo by Renee Garfias

Suggested citation:

BLM. 2025. Cultural Resources Program Highlights BLM Colorado Fiscal Year 2025. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office, Lakewood, Colorado.

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Bureau of Land Management Colorado Cultural Resources Program Highlights Fiscal Year 2025

Section 110 Highlights

Las Animas Ethnography and Cultural Survey Royal Gorge Field Office

The Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO), in collaboration with Pinyon Canyon Maneuver Site (U.S. Army) and the Comanche National Grasslands (USFS) are completing an ethnographic study of Las Animas County, Colorado, funded by the RGFO and hosted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USFS, U.S. Army, and Living Heritage Anthropology (LHA).

The BLM has partnered with Living Heritage Anthropology to conduct a landscape level ethnographic study of tribal cultural connections to Las Animas County. The goal of the study is to inform the BLM of



Figure 1. Looking north over Chacuaco Creek Canyon in Las Animas County in the southeast corner of Colorado



how Native American Tribal Nations are connected to the region, its resources, and landscape. This information will aid in managing BLM administered lands and sub-surface minerals in this area, as well as serve as the basis for ongoing consultation with associated Tribes.

To accomplish this project, LHA continues to perform field visits with multiple Tribes while BLM cultural staff complete resource surveys on BLM administered lands within the county. To date, 67 acres of BLM administered land has been surveyed in relation to this project. In addition, scoping visits conducted internally and in conjunction with LHA ethnographers during the spring/summer of 2025 identified several areas for future tribal member visits.

Figure 2. View of the southern end of the hogback landform on the southern edge of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in Las Animas County in the southeast corner of Colorado

McIntire Ranch Vegetation Removal

San Luis Valley Field Office

The San Luis Valley Field Office (SLVFO) Cultural Program, Volunteers of Colorado, and the SLVFO Wildlife Program removed hazardous fuels from around McIntire Ranch near the Conejos River. McIntire Ranch is an 1880s territorial adobe style house in Conejos County. It was the residence of Colorado Governor Albert McIntire and his wife Florence. After Albert and Florence divorced, Albert deeded the ranch to Florence. Florence owned and operated the ranch until her death in 1912. The ranch was listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. Additionally, Colorado Preservation, Inc. listed the site on Colorado's Most Endangered Places list in February of 2019.

Volunteers and the BLM removed dead and down hazardous fuels including cottonwood limbs, trunks, and brush from around the structure. The material was piled at a location away from the structure to be burned at a future date. This project reduced the fuel load and fire potential around the structure and restored the site's setting and feeling to more similarly match the site's period of significance.



Figure 4. McIntire Ranch after hazardous fuels removal



Figure 3. Historic photo of McIntire Ranch in 1890

**Class III Cultural Resource Inventory in the Ninemile Hill Area
Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, Grand Junction Field Office**

In FY 2025, the BLM conducted an inventory to obtain more information about the cultural resources present in the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, managed by the Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO). A GJFO archaeologist performed a Class III inventory of 75 acres in May and July 2025. The inventory resulted in the documentation of seven newly recorded cultural resource sites and five isolated finds. The sites include one historic road, three historic trash scatters, two prehistoric open lithic scatters, and one multi-component prehistoric lithic scatter with an historic cairn.



Figure 5. Ninemile Hill project area overview

**Section 110 Inventories Along the Old Spanish National Historic Trail
McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area, Grand Junction Field Office**

The GJFO undertook two Section 110 projects examining the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) and the Salt Lake Wagon Road.

West of Castle Rocks, the first project examined areas along or near the designated route of the OSNHT where it diverges from the known route of the Salt Lake Wagon Road, to assess the plausibility of this course as an alternative or parallel trail segment. At the same time, the project examined a water source noted in the 1858 Loring Expedition journal.

Assessment of a possible trail route inventory identified a series of cairns needing further work to evaluate for eligibility. Inventory also identified a previously undocumented early historic Ute Indian style panel near the water source, with possible association with the OSNHT, and it identified Archaic and likely Ute occupation sites, one almost two acres in extent.

The second project was an expansion of work done in FY 2024 and mapped additional traces of the Salt Lake Wagon Road (SLWR), a local successor of the North Branch of the OSNHT, possibly as far east as its crossing at West Salt Creek. FY 2025 work found historic bottle



Figure 6. Projectile point and amethyst (solarized) glass found along the SLWR swale

fragments of similar type to those previously recorded at nearby site 5ME.3756, demonstrating that site's functional association (not merely collocation) with the SLWR.

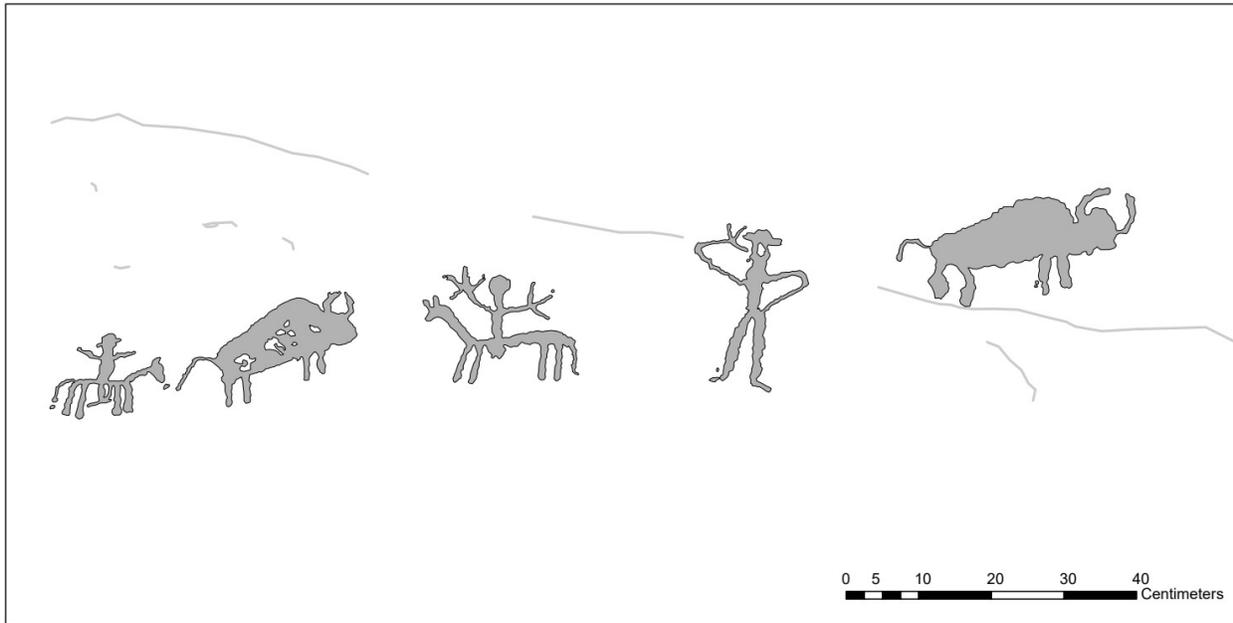


Figure 7. Historic Ute art possibly associated with use of the route now designated the OSNHT

Recording Site 5DT.3037 with Site Stewards Uncompahgre Field Office

In 2025, local site stewards notified the BLM of an unrecorded site containing rock imagery north of the town of Delta. Four site stewards assisted the BLM archaeologist by documenting, mapping, photographing and noting impacts to the site.



Figure 8. Archaeologist Breana Esparza with two BLM-UFO site stewards recording a sheltered camp with rock imagery along the Gunnison River near Delta

CANM's Cultural Site Steward Program

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

The Monument Cultural Site Stewardship Program, administered by the BLM and the Southwest Colorado Canyons Alliance, includes 117 prehistoric, historic, and dual-component sites. The program includes sixty-six site stewards, most of whom monitor more than one site. These volunteers contributed approximately 806 hours of time and drove 11,289 miles. At an estimated BLM volunteer value of \$33.49/hour and \$0.14/mile, this equates to a total of \$28,573 for donated labor and mileage. Additionally, site stewards have participated in over 158 hours of training, lectures, and volunteer work during the year, helping them all better understand the sites and landscape for which they volunteer.

Figure 9. Participants in CANM's Cultural Site Stewardship Program visit a backcountry Ancestral Puebloan site



Section 106 Highlights

San Luis Valley Travel Management Modification Project *San Luis Valley Field Office*

The San Luis Valley Field Office modified their existing Travel Management Plan to meet desired future conditions by opening, closing, and realigning over 60 miles of routes throughout the field office from Poncha Pass to the state line. A cultural resource survey was conducted in-house to support Section 106 and NEPA compliance. Forty-eight resources were monitored, updated, or recorded. The implementation of avoidance, minimization, and monitoring measures protect historic properties throughout the field office.



Figure 10. Folsom projectile point fragment found on survey

Lee Fire Emergency Response *White River Field Office*

The BLM Northwest District Fire archaeologist, in coordination with local and interagency archaeological staff, managed all activities related to cultural resource mitigation during emergency response to the White River Field Office's (WRFO) Lee Fire, Colorado's fifth-largest recorded wildfire. The archaeologist also led identification efforts ahead of suppression repair and conducted proactive surveys and site monitoring for the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

assessment. Suppression repair surveys included 68.7 miles of dozer and mixed construction lines for a total of 820 acres of inventory. Monitoring and suppression repair surveys were conducted in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.14, which encourages agencies to develop procedures for taking historic properties into



Figure 11. General setting overview of the Lee Fire area

account during emergency response operations. Proactive BAER surveys totaling 345 acres and site monitoring were conducted to meet the requirements of various regulations regarding the protection of cultural resources on public lands.

As a result of this effort, 30 previously identified resources (23 cultural and seven paleontological resources) were monitored and an additional 41 cultural resources were newly identified and recorded. Of the monitored sites, nine were assessed by the BAER team for emergency stabilization treatments. All known cultural resources that were monitored were either evaluated as “eligible” or “needs data” for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or did not have a previous assessment and were therefore treated as an historic property. BLM informally consulted with the WRFO's consulting Tribes via email and phone throughout this effort, with positive feedback and interest in ongoing consultation. Formal correspondence for the Lee Fire will happen once BLM finishes the suppression repair survey report and have more concrete plans for the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation project(s).

Programmatic Agreement for the Proposed Issuance of Grazing Permits for the Yellowjacket and Flodine Park Allotments ***Canyons of the Ancients National Monument***

In 2025, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument began implementing a programmatic agreement to resolve adverse effects to historic properties from the proposed issuance of livestock grazing permits. The agreement ensures a consistent and predictable approach in analyzing and accounting for the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of permitted grazing upon historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect. This programmatic agreement was an achievement reached through coordinated effort by BLM, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Tribes, 49 interested parties, local governments, and professional organizations.

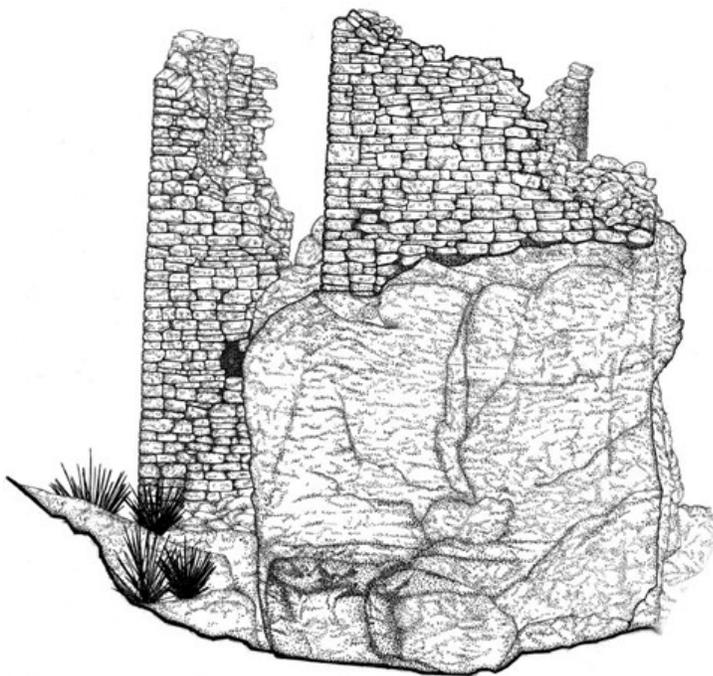


Figure 12. Ancestral Puebloan (AD 1225-1275) masonry structure with the Flodine Park grazing allotment

Phil's World 1.0 Existing Trails MOA Implementation
Tres Rios Field Office

The Tres Rios Field Office continued implementation of the Phil's World 1.0 Existing Trails Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to resolve adverse effects to historic properties from a motorized trail system. MOA mitigation measures include route closures, reroutes, erosion control features, and addition of cultural resource protection language to kiosk.



Figure 13. Motorized route closure

Resolution of Adverse Effect for Terra Energy Partners' Proposed RB-11-19-297 & RG 32-28-298 Well Locations and Related Linear Route
White River Field Office

In consultation with SHPO and WRFO's consulting Tribes, WRFO worked with Terra Energy Partners (TEP) to revise the pipeline disturbance corridor in their original proposal to avoid adverse physical effects to the prehistoric, open architectural site 5RB.5935. This was the only at-risk historic property identified during Class III inventory, and with this revision, surface disturbing activities would now avoid this site by a minimum of 40 meters. This reroute would also complement WRFO's standard of following the existing surface disturbance corridors when



Figure 14. Archaeological consultant at the 5RB.5935 stacked rock feature that was avoided through project redesign

feasible for new development, with a two-track road within the viewshed of 5RB.5935 that was able to be followed to avoid additional significant visual impacts. This alternative, versus creating a new disturbance corridor to avoid this site by a larger buffer, was also determined appropriate in consultation with the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray Reservation and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe at an in-person biannual consultation meeting hosted by BLM Colorado. WRFO subsequently received SHPO concurrence on the alternative.

Data Recovery of Three Sites for Tri-State Generation and Transmission Inc.'s CO2 Loop Access Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

This project mitigated direct effects to cultural resources that were likely to occur while accessing existing power pole structures during maintenance of an existing transmission line. While most



of the potential impact issues have been resolved elsewhere by routing access around cultural resource sites, three archaeological sites are crossed by an existing and historically used access road to three poles for which no other access exists. Consultation with the SHPO and affiliated Tribes concluded that a combination of site protective measures and data recovery were required to mitigate impacts. The three excavated sites contained cultural material dating back to 5,000 BC but were primarily for the Formative Ancestral Puebloan Period between AD 500 and 1300.

Figure 15. Photograph displaying the floor surface of the excavated Late Basketmaker III (AD 650-750) pithouse with site 5MT21529

Issuing a Grazing Permit on the Bocco Mountain Allotment Colorado River Valley Field Office

In anticipation of issuing a cattle grazing permit on Bocco Mountain, the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) coordinated with the applicant, Tribes, and the SHPO to implement the permit in a way that would minimize impacts to cultural resources. The application proposed the incorporation of virtual fence technology, which enables livestock producers to create and utilize numerous pastures without physical fences. This reduces the need for physical fences and their maintenance, minimizes disturbances from grazing, and allows for rest during active plant growth.

Based on the feedback provided during the October 2024 BLM Colorado and Ute Tribes Biannual meeting, CRVFO coordinated with the livestock permittee, the base property owner, and the CRVFO interdisciplinary team to add terms and conditions to the permit to address

cultural concerns. As part of the permit, the operator will submit an actual use report no later than 15 days after livestock have been removed. This report will include a grazing heat map showing livestock use areas produced by virtual fence software. Based on these reports and prior to future turnout, annual operation instructions will be updated in cooperation with the grazing permittee and CRVFO staff to address resource concerns as they are noted. Stocking rates, stocking density, virtual fence pastures, and periods of use will be determined using previous years' monitoring data, livestock heat maps, and climate data.

Museum Collections and NAGPRA Highlights

NAGPRA Repatriation and Reburial *Tres Rios Field Office*

In 2025, the Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO) repatriated three ancestors—one of which has been in collections for over 40 years—and completed the reburial of these ancestors on TRFO-administered lands. The reburial took place in May 2025 with the assistance of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. With the completion of the repatriations and reburials, TRFO does not have any outstanding NAGPRA collections.

Conservation Mount Making at Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum *Canyons of the Ancients National Monument*

At the request of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum hosted a mount-making training workshop to learn techniques to create archival mounts for housing tribal objects. This is the first of scheduled workshops to collaborate with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe to provide training and collaborate on museum preservation methods.

Figure 16. Ute Mountain Ute THPO staff and a CANM volunteer practice mount-making techniques



Figure 17. CANM volunteer Graham Johnson works with THPO volunteer Kate Arkansas to cut archival foam with an electric knife

BLM Colorado's Progress in Repatriation and Disposition of NAGPRA Items

Colorado State Office

In compliance with the updated Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) regulations, the BLM Colorado made strides in addressing the NAGPRA backlog. In 2025, BLM Colorado received 12 museum statements describing NAGPRA collections and determined that some or all the collections in custody of eight of the facilities contain human remains, associated funerary objects, and/or possible NAGPRA cultural items which originated from BLM-administered lands and were collected before November 16, 1990. These collections also contain possible NAGPRA cultural items collected after 1990, depending on further consultation, for which BLM must complete disposition.

It appears that museums and institutions interpreted the NAGPRA regulations in two ways. Some listed only information for suspected or known human remains, associated funerary objects, and/or cultural items, while others listed all artifact collections they believed to originate from BLM-administered lands that may contain NAGPRA items. Consultation with some Tribes to date has indicated that there may be items that archaeologists and curators may not have previously identified as NAGPRA cultural items but may be considered such by Native American Tribes. Therefore, the BLM is evaluating and consulting on over 41,600 items which may fall under NAGPRA, as well as at least 27 ancestors.

BLM Colorado sent initial consultation to Tribes in September of 2025 and anticipates a robust consultation period. BLM Colorado is humbled to be able to return ancestors and their belongings to their ancestral Tribes and homelands.