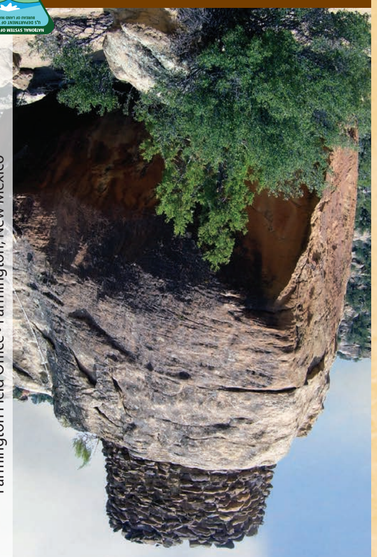
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

BLM

Farmington Field Office • Farmington, New Mexico

Defensive Sites of Dinétah



SITE ETIQUETTE: The sites are hundreds of years old. Although they have been stabilized, they are fragile and irreplaceable and your help is needed to preserve them for others to enjoy. To help preserve the sites, and for your own safety, please do not climb on the walls or roofs of the pueblitos. Remember that it is against the law to remove artifacts from archaeological sites on public lands. You may examine artifacts you may find but leave them where you found them. Please do not touch the rock art panels, as the acids on your skin can damage the panels. **Pack out your trash.**

TRAVEL ADVISORY: There are no services in the canyons, so begin with a full tank of gas, and take water and food for the day. Travel can be difficult and dangerous due to changing weather conditions. Exercise caution when crossing sandy washes, especially Largo Canyon. *For your safety, never cross a wash when water is present.* Wet roads can become very slick and make driving difficult. High-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles are recommended. You are in one of the largest oil and natural gas fields in the United States, so be aware of large oilfield trucks and keep to the right on hills and blind corners. Please refrain from parking on oil and natural gas well locations. Cell phone coverage is erratic.

Bureau of Land Management
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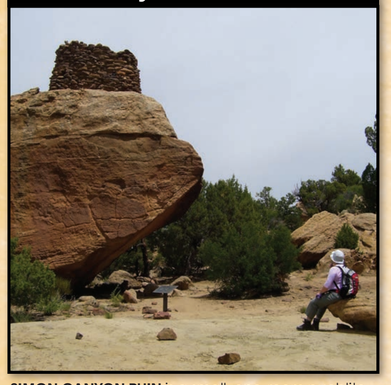
Simon Canyon Ruin



SIMON CANYON RUIN is a small, one-room pueblito built atop a 20-foot high boulder, on a narrow bench overlooking Simon Canyon, a rugged side canyon off the San Juan River. It was constructed in 1754, making it one of the last pueblitos built, and is one of the few pueblitos located north of the San Juan River, which traditionally formed the boundary between the Navajo and the Utes. Simon Canyon was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

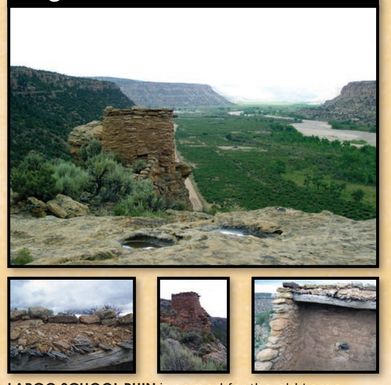
Handholds and footholds were carved into the sandstone high up on the side of the boulder and the inhabitants used a notched log as a ladder to reach them. The log could then be pulled up to the top of the boulder to prevent enemies from climbing up from below. Simon Canyon Ruin was unusual because other pueblitos could not be seen from the site and forked-pole hogans do not appear to have been located nearby. A nearby small spring provided water for residents of the site. Simon Canyon Ruin can be reached by driving to the parking lot and picnic area for Simon Canyon Recreation Area, located on the north side of the San Juan River, 3.5 miles below Navajo Dam. A moderate half-mile hike leads to the site.

Tapacito Ruin

TAPACITO RUIN is one of the earliest known pueblitos (built during the summer of 1694) and is very different from other pueblitos. It has no exterior doors or windows and access to the rooms was by roof hatches and ladders. It originally had at least seven ground floor rooms and a parapet or second story. Its massive three-foot thick walls were constructed using a technique called "core-and-veneer," in which two walls of sandstone slabs were built a foot or so apart, and then the space between them was filled with rubble and adobe. Walls like these can be seen at Chaco Canyon and Aztec Ruins, and it is theorized that this site may have been constructed by refugees from the Pueblo of Jemez after hostilities with the Spanish in July 1694. Tapacito Ruin was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

From the bridge at Largo School Ruin, continue south on the Largo Canyon Road for approximately 2.5 miles, to where Tapacito Creek enters Largo Canyon. Cross the wash (there is no bridge—only cross the washes if there is no water present). Follow the road up Tapacito Canyon for about two more miles, then take the road across the creek. Double back on the road on the other side of the creek, toward Largo Canyon, for approximately 2.4 miles, and park at the small parking area. The pueblito is only a short walk from the parking area.

Largo School Ruin



LARGO SCHOOL RUIN is named for the old Largo School (now privately owned) in the canyon below. Located on a sandstone outcrop high on a mesa, the pueblito has extensive views up and down Largo Canyon, as well as into Ice Canyon to the east. It was constructed in 1736 and 1737, although other structures—including a hogan, a sweat lodge and rock alignments—are also at the site, but may have been built at different times. Several Puebloan pottery fragments, as well as Navajo pottery types, indicate that the inhabitants interacted with other groups in the region. An iron awl and an iron tack show that the inhabitants had access to Spanish goods. Largo School Ruin was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

To reach Largo School Ruin, continue north past Hooded Fireplace approximately a quarter-mile, to a small parking area on the east side of the road. From the parking lot it is an easy half-mile hike to the pueblito, mostly following an abandoned two-track road.

Crow Canyon Site

CROW CANYON SITE includes a five-room pueblito, an additional room atop a large boulder, the remains of eight forked-pole hogans, two sweat lodges and two petroglyph panels. Three cliff-edge masonry grain storage structures were also found at the site. The buildings were constructed sometime after 1715, and continued to be renovated until at least 1723. Pieces of pottery made by different Puebloan groups, in addition to Navajo pottery, were found at the site, showing the inhabitants had contacts with peoples living along the Rio Grande.

The Crow Canyon Petroglyphs and the Crow Canyon Site both lie within the Crow Canyon National Register District, listed on the Register in 1974.

A sign on the road near the start of the "44 panel" trail points toward the Crow Canyon Site. Access to the pueblito is strenuous and it is best approached from the east after climbing up a steep, rocky slope.

Early Diné History

The small, aboveground masonry structures of northwest New Mexico called "pueblitos" (the word is Spanish for "little pueblos") drew the attention of the first European settlers to this area centuries ago. The pueblitos were observed by Spanish travelers in the early to mid-1700s, who remarked that they were places of defense against the Utes and Comanches.

In the early 1900s, the noted archaeologist Alfred Kidder proposed that these structures might have been built by Puebloan refugees fleeing Spanish reprisals after the Spanish reconquest of New Mexico in 1692. It was this theory, as well as their massive stone walls, that contributed to these sites being called "pueblitos," although further research has established that most, if not all, of the pueblitos were constructed by the Navajo.

The Gobernador Period (1692-1775) was a time of turmoil in northwest New Mexico *(called "Dinétah," the ancestral homeland of the Navajo, or Diné, people).* Most pueblitos were constructed between 1710 and 1750, a time when the Navajo came under pressure from Ute tribes to the north, that would raid the Navajo for food, livestock and slaves to exchange with the Spanish for horses and tools. In time, pressure from Ute raiding parties, combined with a drought in the late 1740s, forced the Navajo from Dinétah. They relocated to the south and west, where other Navajos already resided.

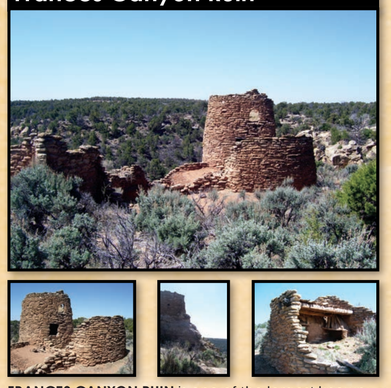
As you visit the pueblitos, you will see many of the ways the Navajo devised to protect themselves—locations high on boulders, doors that are low or behind a protective wall, small windows through which weapons could be shot, and wide views of the surrounding territory. Ladders or hand-and-toe holds were often used to reach the pueblitos. Many pueblitos are also visible from several other pueblitos in the area, possibly allowing for communication by signal fires.

More than 200 pueblitos are known to exist and many are part of larger sites that include forked-pole hogans, trash mounds, outdoor hearths, and often sweat lodges and rock art. Pueblitos vary in size from one to over 40 rooms and were constructed of sandstone slabs and mud mortar. Roofs and ceilings were built from the "viga and latilla" construction style common in the Southwest—heavy beams overlaid with smaller timbers and then covered with mud. The roofs of many pueblitos are still partially intact. Corner shelves, hooded fireplaces and storage bins all made the rooms more comfortable and useful, and inside walls were often plastered with adobe. Artifacts found at pueblito sites include fragments of decorated Navajo pots (called Gobernador Polychrome), Navajo utility pots and decorated Puebloan and Spanish pottery. Metal artifacts obtained from the Spanish are also indications of trade with other groups.

Please Note: Under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, it is a criminal offense to remove artifacts from, or deface or destroy any archaeological site on public land. Penalties of up to $100,000 and/or five years in prison can be imposed upon conviction.

New Mexico's cultural resources need your help! Join the fight to protect our heritage by reporting theft or vandalism. If you witness a crime, call the San Juan County Sheriff's Office at 505.334.6622. If possible, note the time, place, license numbers and descriptions of vehicles and individuals involved. ***Do not put yourself at risk—do not attempt to apprehend the criminal(s).***

Frances Canyon Ruin

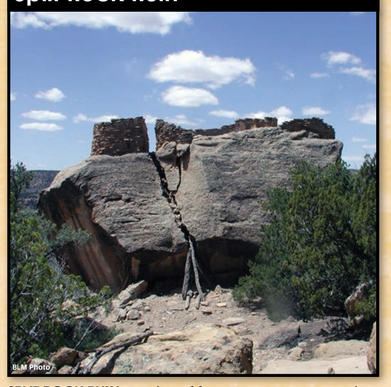


FRANCES CANYON RUIN is one of the largest known and one of the best preserved of the Navajo pueblitos. Tree-ring dates indicate that construction began in 1710 and additions and renovations continued there until 1745. The complex consists of an estimated 40 rooms and includes a three-story tower that overlooks the canyon, storage bins, and hooded Spanish-style fireplaces. Supports for weaving looms were also found. Some of the roofs remain intact.

The site was first excavated by Earl Morris—who also excavated Aztec Ruins—in 1915. Among other artifacts, he recovered a fragment of a seventeenth-century wheel lock rifle from the site. Rock art, forked-pole hogans, sweat lodges and basins used for grinding corn surround the pueblito. In 1970 Frances Canyon Ruin was included on the National Register of Historic Places.

To access the site, take NM Highway 527 north from U.S. Highway 64 to Mile Marker 11, and turn left *(west)* and follow the road to the mesa top. Continue to follow the road to a "T" intersection approximately 2.5 miles from the base of the mesa. Turn right *(south)* and continue an additional 0.5 mile, then keep left at the Y-intersection, continue about 400 feet, then turn left *(northeast)* and follow the pipeline about 0.2 mile to the parking area. A short, gentle hike leads to the site. A high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended.

Split Rock Ruin



SPLIT ROCK RUIN consists of four rooms constructed on top of a 40-foot boulder at the edge of a cliff, about a half-mile north of Tapacito Ruin. It was built in at least two episodes, sometime during the late 1720s or 1730s, though the site was probably only occupied for a few years. The inhabitants would have reached the structure by using a notched pole as a ladder to reach the cleft in the rock, and then they would climb up from there. In addition to the pueblito, two forked-pole hogans, two sweat lodges, and possibly a small corral were part of the site. Split Rock Ruin was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

To access Split Rock Ruin, continue along the road past the parking area at Tapacito Ruin for an additional half-mile. A two-track trail can be seen leading east from the main road at this point. Park alongside the main road and follow the easy trail to the interpretive sign at the base of the cliff. *For your safety, do not try to climb the cliff to the site. The best way to view Split Rock Ruin is from below.*

Hooded Fireplace Ruin

HOODED FIREPLACE RUIN is unusual in that it was built on a broad bench on the side of a mesa overlooking Largo Canyon. Most other pueblitos were built in defensive locations—on a boulder or a pinnacle. Hooded Fireplace is larger than the majority of pueblito sites, with six contiguous rooms, all of which were built at the same time in the late summer or early fall of 1723. The site is named for the well-reserved Spanish-style hooded fireplace in the corner of the rooms. An intact roof, with a corner entry way, still covers one of the rooms. In spite of its large size, it was probably not occupied for more than a few years. Hooded Fireplace Ruin was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

To reach Hooded Fireplace Ruin travel south along the Largo Canyon Road *(County Road 4450)* for 1.8 miles south of the bridge at Largo Canyon School. Turn west up a steep road that climbs out of the canyon to the first bench. Keep to the right and continue north for another two miles. Hooded Fireplace Ruin is clearly visible above the road to the west. It is a short but steep hike up to the pueblito.

Crow Canyon Petroglyphs

CROW CANYON PETROGLYPHS are the most extensive and well-known collection of early Navajo petroglyph *(carved rock art)* images. Earlier Ancestral Puebloan *(Anasazi)* images can also be found among the Navajo rock art etched in south-facing canyon walls. Hundreds of images of animals, humans, supernatural beings, and other items such as corn plants and bows and arrows can be found along the walls. Most of the images are clustered in "panels," on the lower cliff faces of the canyon. Archaeologists believe the panels may have been associated with ceremonies, as many of the images are similar to Navajo ceremonial sand paintings.

To reach the petroglyphs, a high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. Take County Road 4450 for 19 miles south from its junction with U.S. Highway 64. Follow the signs across Largo Wash, then turn north and drive approximately one mile to the mouth of Crow Canyon. *(NOTE: Do not cross either wash when water is present, and caution should be used when sand is either very wet or very dry. Get out of your vehicle to check the condition of the wash.)* Signs direct you to the main panels at the mouth of the canyon. To see the "44 panel," follow the road up the canyon, and then park at the well pad. Signs direct you to the trail to the panel, a hike of about three-quarters of a mile.

Unless otherwise noted all photos by Michael Bulloch
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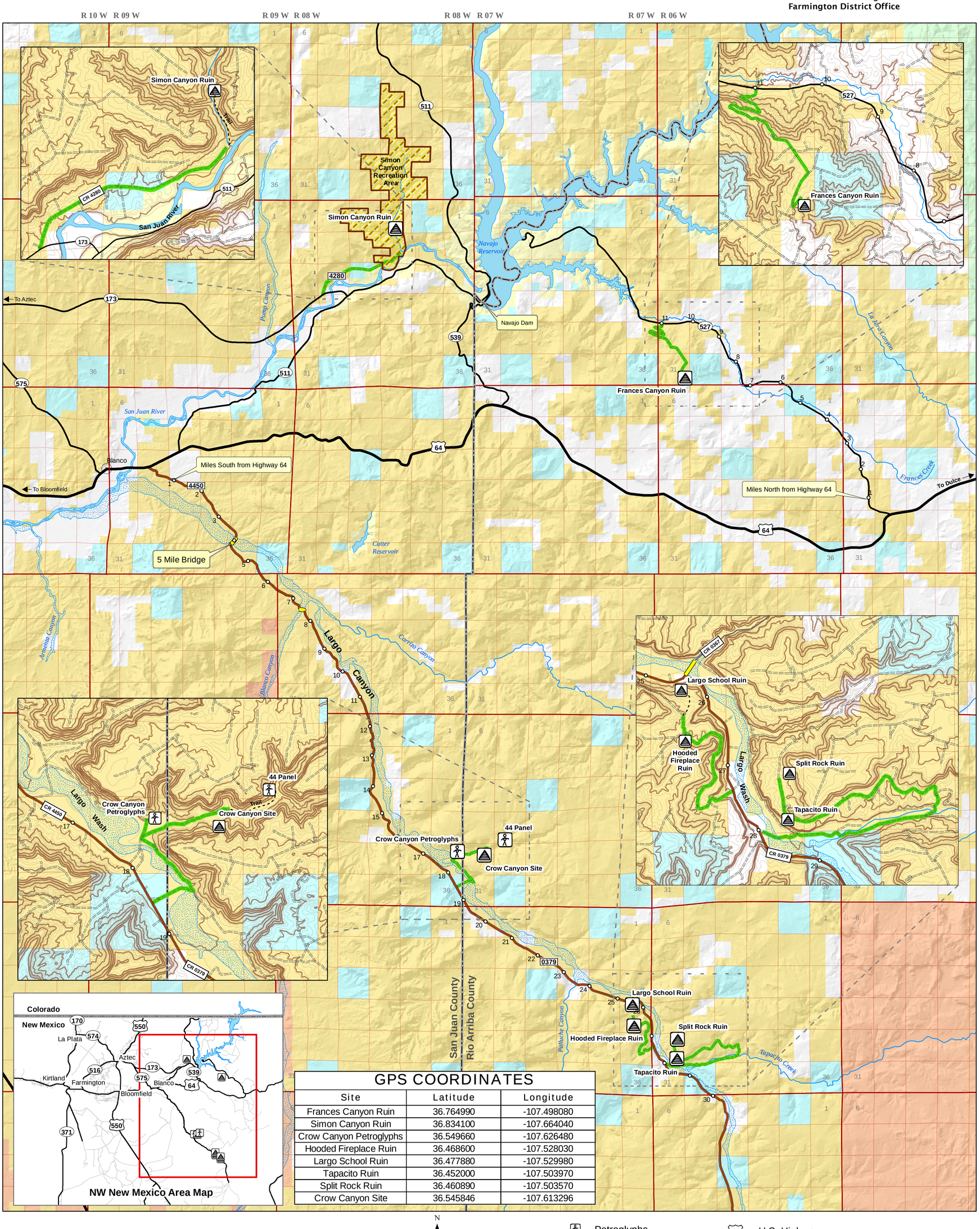
Defensive Sites of Dinétah

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington District Office



GPS COORDINATES

Site	Latitude	Longitude
Frances Canyon Ruin	36.764990	-107.498080
Simon Canyon Ruin	36.834100	-107.664040
Crow Canyon Petroglyphs	36.549660	-107.626480
Hooded Fireplace Ruin	36.468600	-107.528030
Largo School Ruin	36.477880	-107.529980
Tapacito Ruin	36.452000	-107.503970
Split Rock Ruin	36.460890	-107.503570
Crow Canyon Site	36.545846	-107.613296

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by the BLM. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information may be updated without notification.

* GPS coordinates are only as accurate as the GPS unit being used. Please use with caution.

** The recommended access routes are described in the literature on the opposite side of brochure. Please be sure to read the description accompanying this map. Some roads require higher clearance 4wd vehicles.

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Map Projection: NAD 83 New Mexico State Plane Feet

0 1 2 3 4 Miles

0 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

Petroglyphs
Ruins
Town
Dirt Road
Paved Highway
Access Route **
U.S. Highway
State Highway
County Road
Bladed Dirt Road
Trail
Bridge
BLM
Private
State
Tribal