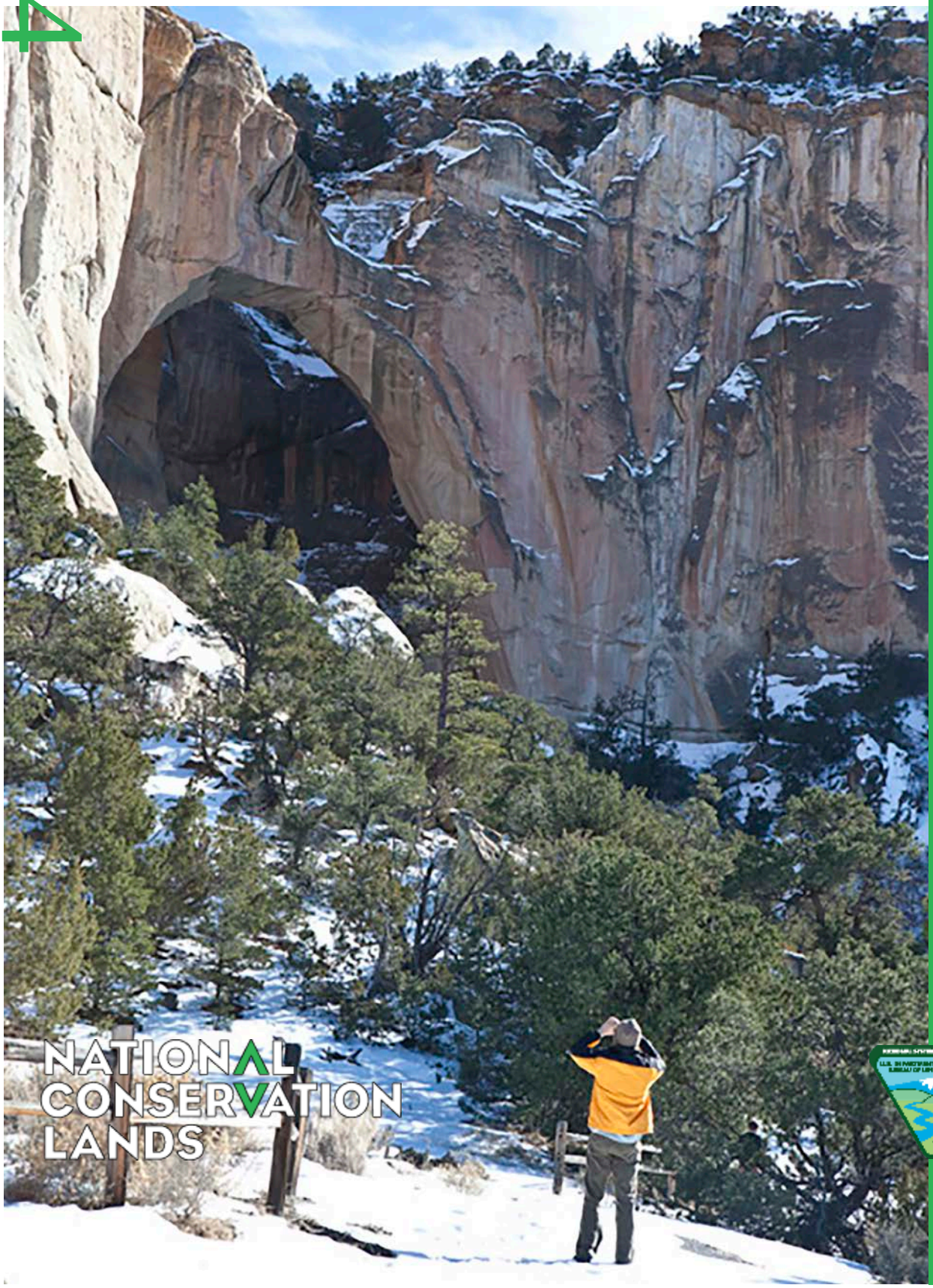
Manager's Annual Report

2014

El Malpais

National Conservation Area

Manager's Annual Report
FY 2014



BLM

New Mexico

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1 El Malpais Profile

Designating Authority

Designating Authority: El Malpais Act, Public Law 100-225

Date of Designation: December 31, 1987

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	BLM Acres	Other Fed. Acres	State Acres	Other Acres
262,100 acres	227,100 acres			35,000 acres

Contact Information

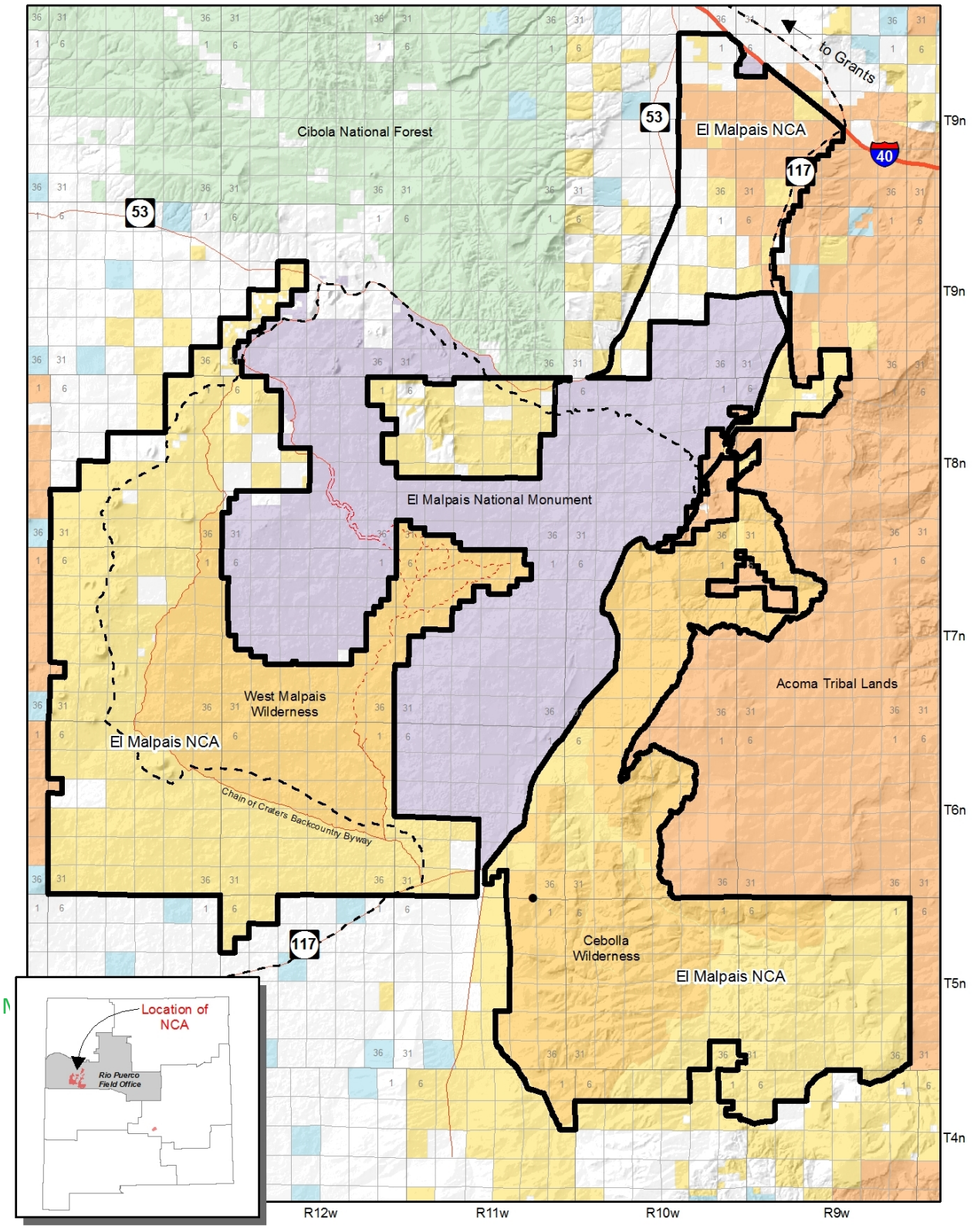
Unit Manager	Phone	E-mail	Mailing Address
Kenneth Jones Supervisory Park Ranger	505-287-6603	kjones@blm.gov	PO Box 846 Grants, NM 87020

Field Office	District Office	State Office
Rio Puerco	Albuquerque	New Mexico

Budget

Total FY14 Budget	Subactivity 1711	Other Subactivities' Contributions	Other Funding
$545,500	$220,500	$325,000	$0

El Malpais National Conservation Area



Staffing

The work of the El Malpais National Conservation Area (NCA) is accomplished through a dedicated staff assigned to the NCA and the resources staff of the BLM Rio Puerco Field Office.

The dedicated staff includes a supervisory park ranger, five park rangers, and a maintenance worker. One park ranger and the maintenance worker position are both vacant.

The Rio Puerco staff working in the NCA includes the field manager, archaeologist, forester, wildlife biologist, hydrologist, rangeland management specialist, and range technician who each devote up to forty percent of their time to the NCA.

The BLM works cooperatively with the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to operate a regional visitor center which is located adjacent to the NCA.

2 Planning and NEPA

Status of RMP

The El Malpais Plan was completed in September 2001 with the approval of the Record of Decision for the *Proposed El Malpais Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement* (September 2000). The Approved El Malpais Plan amends the *Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan* (RMP). The Approved Plan also included some activity-level decisions for management of the resources of the Plan Area.

The El Malpais Plan is arranged as twenty-one separate sections for the various resources managed in the El Malpais Plan Area. Those decisions and guidance that apply to more than one resource are duplicated in each of the resource sections. Each of the twenty-one resource plan's sections is complete within itself in order to make consistent implementation of the Plan by Field Office resource specialists.

Status of Activity Plans

There are no individual activity plans.

Status of RMP Implementation Strategy

An RMP implementation strategy has been completed, and an RMP evaluation report was completed in July 2013. Key points from the strategy include actions on rangeland resources, recreation, vegetation, riparian, wildlife, forestry, fire management, realty, Native American uses, paleontological resources, and feral horses and burros.

Key NEPA Actions and/or Project Authorizations

A Coordinated Resource Management Plan was completed for the El Malpais Grazing Allotment within the NCA. The El Malpais Grazing Allotment is the largest within the NCA, covering about 100,000 acres.

The NCA was included as part of a Rio Puerco Field Office Wide EA ("Live Tree Severance and Removal") allowing for firewood collection to reduce hazardous fuels, and including off-road vehicle use to access collection areas.

3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

Wilderness

Six degraded vehicle routes not in compliance with the management standards of wilderness study area requirements were closed and rehabilitated in the Chain of Craters Wilderness Study Area.

Archaeology

The work of volunteer researcher Sheila Brewer, the longest serving staff member, has been published in a chapter in a volume published by the Archaeological Society of New Mexico. "Rock Art Recording in El Malpais National Conservation Area and El Malpais National Monument" was written by Sheila K. Brewer and Margaret Senter (Gretchen) Obenauf, and published by the Archaeological Society of New Mexico.

Hydrology

BLM fire staff maintained and improved loose-rock check dams in the Cebolla Wilderness. The check dams were built in 2011-2012 to stabilize the bed of Cebolla Creek and raise its elevation by trapping sediment. The objectives were to prevent further channel degradation and to move the stream toward a natural and stable hydrologic and vegetative condition. Permanent cross-sections measured at each cross-section in 2014 indicated continuing success for the majority of the structures. A number of the structures needed maintenance following the summer monsoon rains and should continue to need some degree of maintenance until the system begins to self-stabilize.

Fire/Forestry

The BLM completed 86 acres of thinning in the ponderosa pine - piñon/juniper ecotone. Additionally, 2500 acres of prescribed burn was performed in ponderosa pine in the Merz Ranch area. The treatments are designed for the restoration of ponderosa pine stands, grasslands, and meadows, which are being encroached upon by piñon and juniper do to past land use. These areas reveal severe soil erosion due to vegetative changes. The placement and scattering of the slash from the patch cuts provided ground cover and a micro-climate to help native grasses and forbs get reestablished in areas which are severely degraded, while reducing water run-off and sediment loss.

2,500 acre Mertz Ranch prescribed burn

Current Areas of Focus

Fire

Depending on current conditions, and the desired fuels treatment objectives, prescribed fire may or may not be applied immediately after forestry treatments. If the treatment area is deficient in native grasses, forbs, and ground cover, and is at risk of experiencing above-normal erosion due to this deficiency, slash may not be burned immediately so as to allow the treatment area to recover to reestablished cover.

Slash can be burned under cooler, more moderate conditions with lower fuel moistures which aid in the combustion of fuels. The BLM can also initiate slash burns under cooler temperatures and weather parameters more favorable to fire containment, while still achieving most fuels treatment objectives. This is a safer and more practical alternative to burning in the middle of summer when fire management resources can be limited, burn bans are in effect, and vegetation and soil moistures are more susceptible to long term negative effects. Having the flexibility to burn and accomplish fuels treatment objectives while protecting the resource is of the utmost importance.

Forestry

Firewood removal is now authorized outside of specially-designated areas for permitted public removal of dead firewood, Christmas tree collection, and transplantation outside of wilderness and wilderness study areas. The BLM inventoried and analyzed 173.

Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Education

Make an Ecosystem:
Rangers and volunteers presented five curriculum-based programs in classrooms, where about 300 students were inspired to realize the natural, local balance of plants and animals. They split into competing groups to construct models of local land forms and surface water, and added plants and animals (using picture cards) proportionately to create sustainable habitats. The students demonstrated which human and natural effects could topple their model. They compared and contrasted each other's models. This classroom model is exportable for use in any ecosystem at any time, and the dinosaur-era version was especially popular.

McKinley County Youth, Water, and Energy Festival:
About 300 local students met at Red Rocks City Park where they rotated through stations. The BLM station presented demonstrations on water conservation.

Social and Natural Sciences School Programs:
BLM rangers created and presented 5 days of classroom programs on social and natural sciences to four local schools and 955 students.

Hands on the Land

Futures Foundation Family Center:
BLM rangers presented 35 days of after-school programs to 591 underserved elementary and high school students in a Grants Community-funded project to engage at-risk youth.

Cottonwood Gulch:
For the fifth consecutive year, BLM rangers created and led trekkers on deep ecology programs within the NCA.

Interpretive seminars:
BLM rangers organized and led two trainings for regional BLM and NPS interpreters on volcanism and archaeology.

Take It Outside

Night Hikes:
BLM rangers held monthly summer “evening sensory” walks geared to families to get children of all ages outside after dark. This included walking without flashlights to allow other senses help find the way and hands-on activities to illustrate how the senses work.

Outreach

· 15 minute ranger radio interviews on current NCA trends and events;
· Program fliers;
· Area newspaper articles;
· Public ranger hikes announced online and through Albuquerque Hiking Meetup; and
· Advertised through 4 Corners Geotourism and on National Geographic's website

Interpretation

Art Walks:
The BLM invites artists and photographers from the surrounding area to join this monthly outing to explore seldom seen areas of the NCA and gain inspiration for their art. Artists bring their easels, paints, pencils, and cameras to showcase the beauty of the NCA. This has been a monthly program for over 4 years. The artists who participate in these events have their art displayed in the Ranger Station. The Rangers created two wall exhibits. One was a large NCA color map connected to photographs linking visitors to the sites, the routes, and the destinations. The other was a geological map next to an aerial photo of the NCA. These were both accompanied by a geologic timeline.

Petroglyph Calendar Wilderness Hikes:
The BLM held its sixth year of day-long adventures in wilderness and National Conservation Lands to Ancestral Puebloan archaeological sites. Hikers observed ancient and still-functioning stone calendars. They discovered native flowers, wild birds, and ancient shorelines with shark's teeth and sea shells. They tracked wild animals, practiced orienteering, climbed a volcano, and followed lava tubes.

Haunted Homestead Hike:
This is an annual autumn 5-mile hike to a stabilized 1930s-era homestead. BLM Rangers dressed in period clothing discussed life as a homesteader prior to the designation of the NCA.

Ranger Station:
In 2014, 9,419 visitors came to the BLM's Ranger Station. This building was designed with a blend of Navajo, Pueblo, and modern architecture, and is the gateway to the eastside of the NCA as well as a major stop-over for an Albuquerque to Phoenix route.

Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center:
In 2014, 23,717 visitors came to the BLM, NPS, and USFS multi-agency Visitor Center. The building is a spacious structure with grand views of lava, mesas, and mountains. Located on NPS land, the Visitor Center is staffed by all three agencies, and management is rotated between the agencies annually.

Partnerships

NPS - Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center and collaborative interpretive hikes;
USFS - Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center and collaborative interpretive hikes;
Cottonwood Gulch - Collaborative interpretive youth programs;
Futures Foundation - Collaborative interpretive youth programs;
New Mexico State University - Collaborative interpretive youth programs; and
Volunteers For the Outdoors - Trail work

Volunteers

At El Malpais NCA there are 41 volunteers who assisted with Ranger Station operations, school programs, public ranger programs, trail work, and archaeological site stewardship. Cottonwood Gulch and Volunteers for the Outdoors worked on volunteer service projects, and provided 5,630 hours of volunteer service to the NCA.

A volunteer archaeological site steward conducting monitoring in the Cebolla Wilderness.

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

N/A

4 Science

Science

A Science Plan is under development for the NCA.

5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

La Ventana Natural Arch and Other Geological Resources

Jurassic desert sandstones dominate much of the northern portion of the NCA along SR117. These thick sandstone beds form precipitous cliffs which contain numerous small arches and natural bridges capped by thin Cretaceous sands and clays. The largest natural arch in the NCA is La Ventana, which is 135 feet, making the second largest in New Mexico. To the south, Jurassic sediments dive, then nearly 1000 feet of Cretaceous marine clays are exposed interspersed with beach sand sections. Trace fossils and oysters are common and cephalopods and shark teeth are rare. Younger cinder cone volcanos are numerous on the entire west side along the Chain of Craters (County Road 42). Lava from them fills the low lands in the southern and western portions of the NCA. Noteworthy too, are the larger shield volcano, Cerro Rendija, topped with a cinder cone, and Cerro Brillante, with its numerous volcanic bombs.

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	209,680 acres	209,680 acres	20,970 acres

Stressors Affecting Geological Resources

Erosion - Past and current human activities are causing increased erosion. Natural diurnal and exfoliating thermal expansion and contraction is the primary agent of cliff and arch degradation. However, increased human use has caused mesa top run-off with high sediment loads increasing the effects of frictional and freeze-thaw weathering. Elsewhere within the NCA, vehicles often leave designated roads to avoid muddy sections or to lessen walking distances. Erosion is accelerated in some of these cases by diminishing run-off retention from grasses and shrubs, and this is forming new arroyos.

Collecting - Collecting of fossils has the potential of depleting an already limited resource. Currently, collecting appears limited.

Archaeological and Cultural Resources

El Malpais NCA contains abundant cultural resources including Paleo Indian, Archaic and, Ancestral Puebloan sites; historic Puebloan sites; Navajo sites; and, Anglo and Hispanic homesteads. To date, 756 archaeological sites have been recorded in the NCA. These include historic homesteads and prehistoric pueblos with standing architecture, and petroglyph panels of varying ages, some of which may be solar calendars. The Cebolla Canyon Prehistoric Community is an outstanding Ancestral Puebloan community consisting of more than 50 structural sites dating from before 800 C.E. to after 1300 C.E. One of these pueblos, Oak Tree House, has impressive masonry architecture that has been stabilized. Most of the other recorded cultural resources are sites - some older than 800 C.E. - with subtle surface manifestations such as artifact scatters and rubble mounds. Most of the homestead sites with standing architecture have been formally recorded.

The cultural resources have been the subject of numerous scientific studies including dendrochronology studies to better understand the relationship of past people with the land and how their activities have affected the current condition of the landscape.

Dittert Site

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	75,800 acres	8,050 acres	800 acres

Stressors Affecting Archaeological and Cultural Resources

Pot hunting - Collecting of artifacts has the potential to impact these resources. Currently, collecting appears limited.

Vehicles - Off-road vehicle use impacts have been noted at various sites. Anticipated authorized and unauthorized off-road vehicle use has the potential to significantly impact vulnerable sites.

Livestock - Livestock trails and trampling have been noted at numerous sites. Livestock trails through these sites have the potential to increase erosion and fragment ceramic, lithic, and structural elements. Several homesteads with standing architecture have been fenced for resource protection, but not all have been fenced. The fenced homesteads have had some limited stabilization work to slow the decay of the structures. However, there is not a formal monitoring program in place that tracks their condition.

Erosion - Past and current human activities are causing increased erosion which exposes cultural resources and contributes to their loss.

Ecological Resources

The El Malpais NCA contains highly diverse soils, geologic features, vegetative communities, rare plant species, and habitat that provides nesting, foraging, hiding, thermal, resting, and fawning cover for a variety of species at multiple trophic levels, species and habitat types that interact to create a unique ecological resource. The integrity of ecological resources in the NCA is based on resistance to degradation and resilience to change maintained by the biotic and abiotic components of the ecosystem.

Resistance to degradation refers to this ecosystem's ability to maintain its structural and functional attributes when stress and disturbance occurs. Resilience to change refers to this ecosystem's ability to regain structural and functional attributes that have been harmed by

stress or disturbance. Ecosystem integrity involves the condition of this ecosystem that displays biodiversity and is capable of sustaining normal ecosystem function. It is impossible to remove all forms of stress and disturbance from this environment, thus the resistance and resilience of this ecosystem play an important role in maintaining ecosystem integrity and health while protecting ecosystem diversity.

Ecological resources include biotic and abiotic components that involve complex processes within the NCA. In addition to this biotic community (i.e. plants, animals, and fungi), this ecosystem includes the physical (abiotic) environment that sustains this biotic community. This abiotic environment includes, but is not limited to, the soil or substrate, topographic relief and aspect, hydrology, weather and climate, atmospheric conditions, nutrient regime, and salinity regime. NCA water movement and sequestration in the landscape has unique relationships with wildlife activity and vegetation, and is supported by storage in tinajas and vernal pools, infiltration through lava, and more rarely, perennial riparian areas.

Habitats of the NCA vary with elevation (6,500 to 8,000+ feet) and the soil substrate (volcanics, sand, and clay). These include, but are not limited to, valleys and alluvial plains containing chaparral and grasslands; rocky terrain and slopes containing piñon-juniper woodlands; and northern aspects and lava flows containing isolated stands of ponderosa pine (rarely accompanied by Douglas Fir). Additionally, there are unique and ecologically-important cryptobiotic colonies (some of which are presumably more than 100 years old) as well as unique lava tubes that form shelter for many species, especially bats. Contiguous wild lands of the NPS and Acoma Pueblo nearly double NCA habitat and allows movement of mega fauna.

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Declining

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	120,000 acres	120,000 acres	6,000 acres

Stressors Affecting Ecological Resources

Past land uses - Although absent at the NCA, poplars are present in similar conditions at NCA borders. Human removal may account for this absence, and repopulation may speed the restoration of incised arroyos.

Climate change - Effects of long term regional warming and concomitant drought are highly impactful globally and await local study in the NCA.

Invasive species - Russian thistle and other non-natives, as well as native cacti, forbs, shrubs, and trees have largely expanded into areas lacking a complete grass population.
Livestock - Many grasslands have been grazed to the point of being populated by a single grass species. Regionally, less-grazed grasslands manifest a diversity and much greater grass abundance.

Erosion - Deficit grass populations reduce resistance to erosion during high volume summer rains. Degradation has continued from historic times and is punctuated by deeply incised arroyos and dropping water tables.
Incomplete biologic inventory hinders the ability to establish baselines from which to base decision making for numerous resources within the NCA.

West Malpais Wilderness Area

Scenic Resources

The most recognized scenic resources in the NCA are La Ventana Arch, the sandstone cliffs of The Narrows, the volcanic cones of the Chain of Craters, and the striking and rugged lava flows. Spacious undeveloped views throughout the NCA provide visitors with an opportunity to experience a landscape with little change since the industrialization of the nation. The subtle

nature of the homesteads and Ancestral Puebloan sites that occur in some areas presents unique scenes to visitors from developed areas.

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	262,100 acres	131,000 acres	131,000 acres

Stressors Affecting Scenic Resources

Erosion - This is accelerated from diminishing run-off retention by grasses and shrubs, and increases incision of arroyos.

Off-Road Vehicles - Occasionally, off-road vehicles venture off designated roads to avoid muddy sections or to lessen walking distances. The results vary from new visual scars of flattened vegetation to churn up muddy soils and route widening.

Scientific Resources

The NCA provides the setting for science-based research on geological, archeological, ecological, and cultural resources in a protected locale for which the NCA was designated. The NCA has been the setting for and provides continuing and new opportunities for large landscape-scale scientific research on approximately 230,000 acres. The opportunities for large scale research is further augmented by the NCA's setting adjacent to National Park, National Forest, and Indian Reservations which also protect, to their own degree, large landscapes. The NCA is compatible to research in geology, volcanism, pedology, fire ecology, forestry, botany, wildlife biology, paleontology, climate change, and anthropology. This includes:

- Dendro-chronology studies reveal vast precipitous swings into wetter or drier periods that can help us understand modern climate cycles. Archaeological sites preserve timber that reveals fire activity and periods of drought.
- Ancient fire activity and fire regime cycles likely correlates with human activity and climate factors. This is understudied.

- Volcanoes cover over half of the NCA with age ranges from 3,800 to 700,000+ years. The volcanoes provide for a variety of studies including paleomagnetic records, volcanogenesis, precise age dating, formation of soils, compositional studies, and (with younger flows) studies on volcanic effects on humans.

- Special ecological relationships exist within the NCA including those related to water movement and sequestration of water through the landscape, and the trophic relationships between species. These subjects are understudied.

- Long-term climate change is observed in the cliffs which exposes desert sands later covered by ocean beach sandstones and deep water clays. These rocks, and their associated fossils, provide insight into climate change cause and effect.

- The NCA has been utilized extensively by people as evidenced by ancient pueblos to very recent homesteads. Studies of the uses that have occurred in the NCA can help us understand the cause and effect of people to the environment and the environment to peoples' use. Past uses include Paleo and Archaic Indian agriculture, Navajo and European agriculture, logging, ubiquitous grazing of livestock, and settlements. Understanding the uses and changes in use patterns has application in understanding how to better manage resources in a changing climate as well as how to establish restoration objectives for degraded landscapes.

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	131,000 acres	131,000 acres	32,750 acres

Stressors Affecting Scientific Resources

1. Long Term Climate Change - The International Panel on Climate Change and other studies connect climate change with these scientific resources. The severity of these changes is increasing as is the likelihood of further increase. Whatever change occurs, past scientific evidence is increasingly likely to be lost.

2. Short Term Climate Change - Single rain event severity and interim drought conditions are intensifying erosion, especially noted in arroyo growth. What were once dirt vehicle routes are becoming arroyos.

3. Grazing is impacting the remaining evidence of healthy grass and forb assemblages which were present in the NCA prior to settlement.

4. Forest density and diversity is being reduced by warming and drying trends with concomitant insect attacks. Changing fire frequencies and management suppression strategies could retard or enhance forest evolution.

5. With increasing visitor use has come increased illicit off-road driving and increased erosion.

6. Historic and Ancestral Puebloan structures undergo accelerated decay from mega fauna (e.g. elk, cows) trampling, and ongoing erosion, in addition to ordinary weathering.

7. A lack of comparative species inventory hinders sound decision-making for numerous resources within the NCA. Funding shortages hinder the research efforts typically used in management decisions at an NCA level.

Wilderness Resources

Within the NCA are two wilderness areas (Cebolla and West Malpais) and three Wilderness Study Areas (El Malpais, Chain of Craters, and Canyons). At 144,640 acres, these resources represent approximately 64% of the El Malpais NCA. This value of the NCA is a resource that allows for natural processes that are not manipulated by human activity, natural ecosystems in their primeval condition, landscapes undeveloped by structures, installations, vehicles, or motorized equipment; and, providing outstanding solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. These wilderness resources include the supplemental values of archeological and cultural vestiges of past human activity, and the geologic resources from past volcanic activity.

Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Declining

Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
262,100 acres	262,100 acres	124,100 acres	80,000 acres

Stressors Affecting Wilderness Resources

Vehicle traffic and vehicle routes — Off-road vehicle traffic sometimes illegally occurs within both the Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) of the NCA. This activity occurs throughout the year, and peaks during the hunting season. Some routes in the WSAs (pre-existing routes may be used by vehicles as long as impacts do not exceed conditions at time of

designation), have experienced erosion which impacts wilderness resources and makes them impassible, and further contributes to drivers traveling off designated roads.

Ecological changes — Wilderness is managed to preserve it's primeval condition. However, human induced changes threaten to alter species composition and natural processes within the wilderness. This is described in greater detail in the Ecological Resources section in page 20.

6 Summary of Performance Measure

Within the NCA the trend of the ROVs is mostly stable. Threats to ROVs occur from a few specific present activities, and from lands uses that occurred in the past. For example, vehicles often leave designated roads to avoid muddy sections or to lessen walking distances. When this occurs, new impacts to grass and shrub cover, wilderness resources, and cultural resources may occur. Past land uses including farming and grazing have contributed to some grassland areas being populated by a single grass species and diminished habitat values. The absence of poplars may be a factor of human removal during past periods of homesteading. Both of these land uses contributed to incised arroyos and poor hydrology functioning and exposed cultural resources. Several homesteads with standing architecture have been fenced and stabilized to slow degradation. Forest density and diversity is being reduced by warming and drying trends with simultaneous insect attacks.

Summary Table		
Resource, Object, or Value	**Status**	**Trend**
La Ventana Arch and Other Geological Resources	Good	Stable
Archaeological and Cultural Resources	Good	Stable
Ecological Resources	Fair	Declining
Scenic Resources	Good	Stable
Scientific Resources	Good	Stable
Wilderness Resources	Fair	Declining

7 Manager's Letter

Riparian restoration efforts will continue in Cebolla Canyon. This long term project has the goal of restoring degraded wetlands and streamside vegetation on Cebolla Spring and Creek. Working with the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation and other local groups, the NCA will continue building and maintaining small erosion control structures designed to help slow runoff, retain soil, and raise the water table. Additional efforts complimentary to the stream channel work include improving the health of upland forests and rangelands with the Cebolla Canyon watershed.

Improving signing at the NCA will be a major focus for FY15. Outdated and degraded signs will be replaced along major access roads and at recreation sites to help the NCA meet visitor needs. A new signing plan for the Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center is also being developed. The current signing results in visitors having difficulty in locating the facility. The National Park Service and New Mexico Department of Transportation are partners in these efforts.

The NCA will continue to partner with the New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors in our efforts to maintain and improve the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The NCA hosts the NM VFO two times a year and without the hard work of these volunteers we would not be able provide adequate maintenance of the CDNST.

Volunteers will continue to operate the visitor centers: Highway 117 Ranger Station and Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center. The positions are crucial and require highly skilled volunteers. The service of our volunteers is the only way we have been able to maintain operational standards. These volunteers will continue to co-create public interpretive programs as well as classroom and field educational programs. Many of these volunteers are recruited with a wealth of skills from past professions in education or agency rangers, while others have learned skills on the job and through training opportunities. As a result of volunteer efforts our public and school programs maintain a high level of excellence as evidenced by positive feedback.

The vacant cleaning and maintenance position will continue to be covered by a skilled and motivated volunteer camp host. This host will return for his second season and affirms a commitment to future seasons. By covering the maintenance and cleaning of our recreational sites, this volunteer will free the staff to continue other vital operations.

El Malpais

National Conservation Area

Ranger Station
Phone: 505-280-2918

Bureau of Land Management
Grants Field Station
202 Smokey Circle
Grants, NM 87020
Phone: 505-287-6603

March 9, 2015