



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

Arizona

# Vermilion Cliffs

National Monument

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014



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# 1 Vermilion Cliffs Profile

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## Designating Authority

**Designating Authority:** Proclamation 7374

**Date of Designation:** November 9, 2000

## Acreage

**Total Acres in Unit** 293,687

**BLM Acres** 279,566

**Other Federal Acres** 0

**State and Private Acres\*** 14,121

\*State and Private acres are not part of the designation's federally managed acres.

## Contact Information

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**Field Office Name** Arizona Strip

**District Office Name** Arizona Strip

**State Office Name** Arizona

## Budget

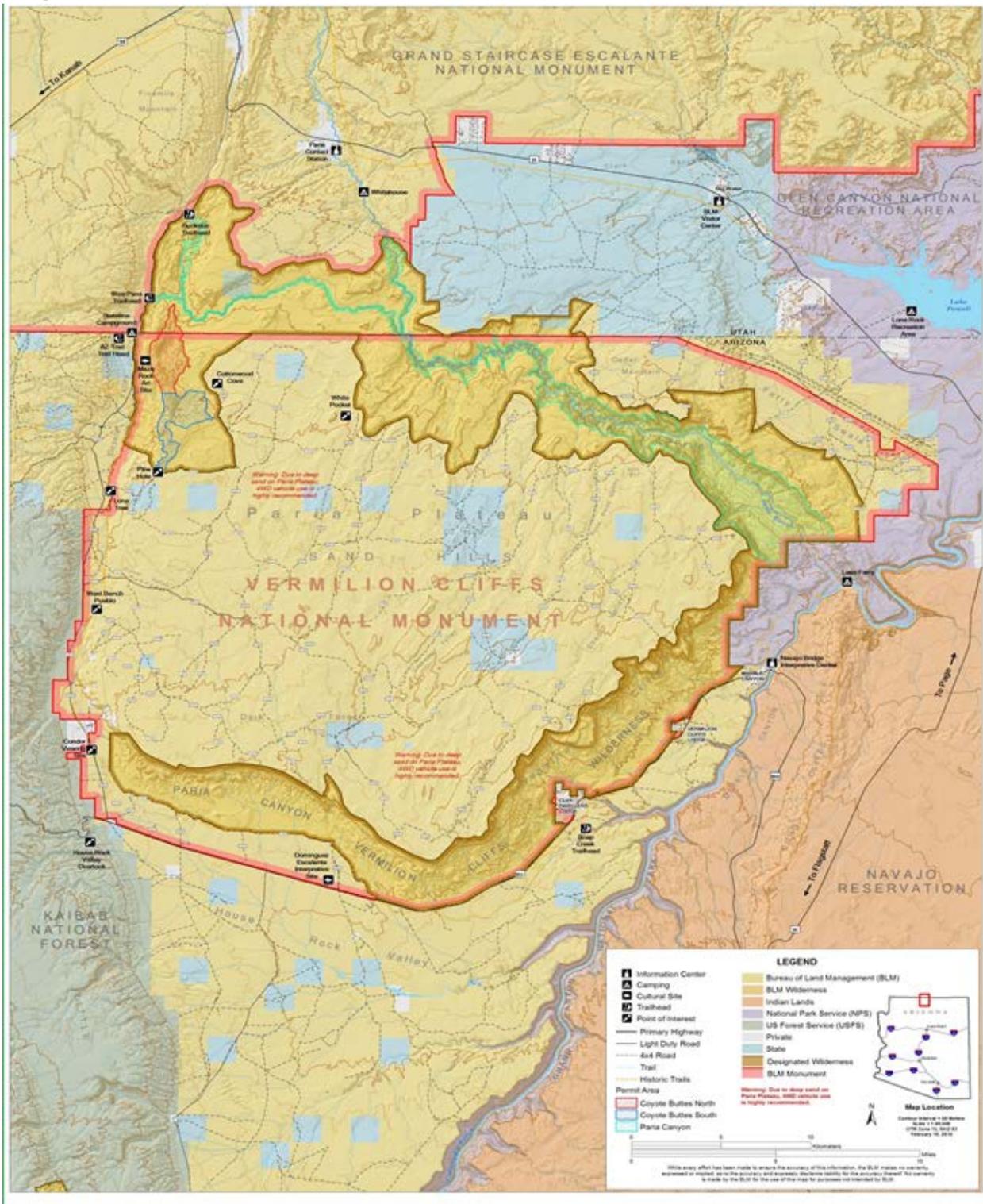
**Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget** \$789,359

**Subactivity 1711** \$376,009

**Other Subactivities' Contributions** \$413,350

**Other Funding** \$0

# Map of Vermilion Cliffs National Monument



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## **Managing Partners**

The Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (AFNM) does not currently have established partnerships to assist with the management of the unit.

## **Staffing**

Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (VCNM) has a dedicated staff of three employees. VCNM employees are an Outdoor Recreation Planner, Recreation Technician, and Rangeland Management Specialist. These employees are based out of the Arizona Strip Field Office located in St. George, UT. VCNM also has a dedicated Law Enforcement Officer based in Kanab, UT.

In FY14, VCNM hired two youth seasonal employees to do route monitoring and install recreation related signs on the monument. The Arizona Strip District received a grant from Arizona State Parks and established an assistance agreement with Southern Utah University's Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative program. The youth employees were hired through that assistance agreement

Monument staff is limited and depends on Arizona Strip Field and District Office staff to accomplish workload measures. This includes support from the following programs: wildlife biology, geology, lands and realty, invasive species, engineering, archaeology, etc.

VCNM also depends on staff through shared positions with the Kanab Field Office and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. These employees aid in the management and administration of the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Special Management Area, which is located on the border of Arizona and Utah within the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness. Shared employees include a Wilderness Ranger, two Visitor Use Assistants, and student interns.

The Dixie Arizona Strip Interpretive Association also contributes a position stationed at the Paria Contact Station. In addition to duties selling merchandise, they aid public visiting the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness with safety and current condition information.

# 2 Planning and NEPA

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## Status of the Resource Management Plan

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for VCNM and associated Record of Decision was signed January 29, 2008. An implementation strategy was completed a year following approval of the RMP. The RMP was evaluated in 2012. It is anticipated that the next RMP evaluation will take place in 2018.

## Status of Activity Plans

VCNM's Science Plan was finalized in 2014.

VCNM's Travel Management Implementation Plan is in draft form and is expected to be completed in FY2015.

## Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

The RMP Implementation Strategy for VCNM was completed in 2009, one year after the RMP was signed. The strategy followed a four-step process to systematically identify the priority workloads associated with the RMP: 1. Outline the work to implement the RMP; 2. Identify priority projects for the next 3-5 years; 3. Identify the tasks required to complete projects and estimate budget needs; and 4. Develop a communications strategy.

Tasks from the strategy were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet through FY14. The intention was to use the strategy to develop Annual Work Plans and Workload Measures.

## Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

Demand for commercial Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) continues to increase. Three additional commercial special recreation permits were authorized in FY14 for a total of 22 SRPs on VCNM. The new SRPs were authorized for guiding hikers in Coyote Buttes and Paria Canyon.

During FY14, four film permits were issued on VCNM. Three permits were for filming at White Pocket. The other permit was for BBC Scotland's documentary "Earth's Natural Wonders" which will feature California condors.

# 3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

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## General Accomplishments

On September 28, 2014, VCNM, in coordination with Friend of The Cliffs, sponsored a National Public Lands Day event at the Condor Viewing Site. Approximately 150 people attended the event to witness the release of three captive bred California condors. The Dixie/Arizona Strip Interpretive Association (D/ASIA) aided the event by providing the public with information on the BLM and Arizona Strip. Chris Parish (with the Peregrine Fund) provided participants with information and gave educational talks on condors and associated issues. Representatives from the Kaibab Piute Tribe and Bodaway Gap Chapter of the Navajo Nation were also in attendance.

The Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Baseline Monitoring Report was completed in FY14. The report evaluates the four qualities of wilderness character as described in The Wilderness Act of 1964: untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, and solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Specific indicators were monitored and documented in order to establish a baseline and evaluate changes in wilderness character over time. It is anticipated that these indicators will be monitored about every five years.

The Science Plan for Vermilion Cliffs National Monument was approved and signed in FY2014. The purpose of the plan is to support conservation, protection, and interpretation of monument values and objects identified in the Presidential Proclamation and the RMP. The plan will also encourage science that can inform management decisions related to those monument objects. The plan will make VCNM competitive when seeking internal and external funds for scientific investigations. Some of the major ongoing scientific undertakings by VCNM include the Kane and Two Mile Ranches Applied Research Plan and the California condor reintroduction program.

Total visitation to VCNM in FY14 was 160,500 visitors.

## Current Areas of Focus

In the summer of 2013, three fatalities occurred in Coyote Buttes due to heat related illness. As a result of these fatalities, a review of visitor safety was undertaken by the Paria Management Team, consisting of specialists and management from VCNM, Kanab Field Office, and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. From that review, the team developed the Paria Safety Action Plan, which was subsequently approved by the Arizona Strip and Color Country District managers and endorsed by the Utah and Arizona BLM state directors. Though the plan didn't make any substantial changes to management of the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area, it has brought visitor safety to the forefront while preserving the area's wilderness character. Some of the management actions implemented in FY14 from the Safety Action Plan include:

- New signs were installed at primary trailheads and access points with stronger

safety messaging;

- Safety messaging was improved on the Paria-BLM website;
- Informational brochures were translated into five foreign languages;
- An outline to standardize safety messaging for the walk-in lottery orientation for Coyote Buttes North was developed and implemented;
- Greater emphasis on encouraging inexperienced users using authorized outfitters and guides;
- A seasonal portable relay station to improve radio coverage in Coyote Buttes was installed. This will improve communications among emergency personnel during Search and Rescue events, and;
- Safety patrols were increased during summer 2014 through the use of existing staff, volunteers, and student interns.

No significant disturbances occurred on VCNM during FY14.

During FY14, VCNM, together with its other partners on the Paria Management Team (Kanab Field Office and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument), investigated the possibility of transitioning the online permitting system for the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area to a new web-host: Recreation.gov. This is part of a government-wide effort to make Recreation.gov a one-stop shop for the public's recreation needs. The goal with this transition is improve customer service and resolve internal inefficiencies with the current system. Efforts with this effort will continue through FY15 with a goal of implementation in FY16.

## **Education, Outreach, and Interpretation**

In April 2014, personnel from Vermilion Cliffs National Monument participated in a Wilderness 50<sup>th</sup> celebration in LaVerkin, Utah. The event was organized by the St. George Field Office and included participants from BLM, Forest Service, various non-profit groups, and other state and local agencies. The public was invited to attend the event which included interpretive talks, live music, and activities. Vermilion Cliffs' theme was wilderness safety and demonstrated the dangers of flash flooding with a flash flood model.

In 2013, staff from Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, Arizona Strip District, and Arizona BLM State Office developed a Junior Explorer Handbook Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. The handbook was printed and released in winter 2014. The handbook features interpretive information for children about monument objects, including California condors, cultural resources, wildlife, and wilderness resources and safety.

Friends of The Cliffs, VCNM's affiliated Friends group, continues to sponsor an Artist-in-Residence program. FoTC's first Artist-in-Residence, Sheila Kollasch from the Phoenix metro area, visited VCNM twice in FY14 to photograph and experience the monument. It is expected that her art will be on public display in FY15.

## Partnerships

VCNM continues involvement with Arizona Game and Fish Department in the lead reduction program. Lead poisoning is the leading cause of mortality in California condors. This program consists of supplying hunters in northern Arizona with lead-free ammunition to use on their big game hunts in hunting units that include VCNM. The program is voluntary but shows participation rates close to what they are in states that ban lead ammunition (i.e. California). The lead reduction program is critical to the success of the California condor recovery program. The BLM continues to contribute financially through an assistance agreement to help pay of the program. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has a similar program.

The Peregrine Fund continues to manage the California condor reintroduction program. VCNM is home to the condor's release site, where The Peregrine Fund brings captive raised condors to be released into the wild. This partnership has existed since 1996 and has been a tremendous success. From a low point of 22 birds in 1982, The Peregrine Fund releases approximately 12-15 birds annually into the wild. There are now over 70 free-flying condors in the Utah-Arizona area. Through an assistance agreement with The Peregrine Fund, BLM contributes funds to support this effort.

VCNM continues to enjoy a partnership with Grand Canyon Trust. From 2008-2012, Grand Canyon Trust organized volunteer groups to hike into Paria Canyon with hand tools and herbicide to treat several miles of the Paria River for invasive plant species, including tamarisk and Russian olive. During these trips, Grand Canyon Trust personnel and volunteer groups cut down trees, treated the stumps with herbicide, and then made slash piles. BLM fire personnel then hike into the Canyon and burn the piles. In 2013, Grand Canyon Trust began monitoring the treatments to determine their effectiveness, impact on the riparian corridor, and to prioritize future management actions. FY2014 was the last year Grand Canyon Trust monitored their plots. From the results of their research and monitoring, VCNM can decide what future management actions would be appropriate and effective to manage invasive species in Paria Canyon.

Friends of The Cliffs (FoTC) became the official "Friends" group for VCNM in FY12 and continue a strong relationship with VCNM. FoTC has proven to be an invaluable partner with the BLM and VCNM. They coordinated activities for VCNM's Public Lands Day. In FY14, they were also successful in securing funding through an NLCS research grant to study bats, migratory birds, and raptors on the Paria Plateau for the second year in a row. They also completed the VCNM Flora project which was also funded with an NLCS research grant. Both the flora and bird research projects were accomplished jointly with volunteers and staff from Grand Canyon Trust. In FY14, FoTC implemented an Artist-in-Residence program with BLM support.

The Dixie Arizona Strip Interpretive Association (DASIA) continues to provide valuable services for VCNM and the public that wants to experience VCNM. In FY14, DASIA supported a full time employee stationed at the Paria Contact Station. This employee is a critical point of contact for the public entering into the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness. They disseminate information on current conditions, discuss wilderness safety

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and ethic, discuss local rules, distribute hiking permits, etc. DASIA volunteers also contribute many hours to answering questions from the public at the St. George Interagency Visitor Center and in helping with hiking permit mailings.

## **Volunteers**

VCNM's partners continue to effectively recruit and manage volunteers that do a tremendous amount of work on and for the monument. Friends of The Cliffs volunteers contributed 130 hours at National Public Lands Day and 70 hours to work on VCNM

Grand Canyon Trust volunteers contributed over 950 hours to work on the monument. This included flora inventories, bat stations maintenance, and monitoring riparian resources in Paria Canyon.

Arizona Site Stewards spent approximately 406 hours monitoring archaeological sites on VCNM.

Volunteer projects managed by VCNM staff include the following: safety patrols at Coyote Buttes North (255 hours), monitoring route conditions and wilderness boundaries in the Ferry Swale area (56 hours), travel management (i.e. sign placement and maintenance; 140 hours), and Paria Canyon clean-up (80 hours).

Total volunteer hours contributed to the monument in FY14 were 1719.

## **Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions**

There were no land acquisitions or interests in lands activities for VCNM completed in fiscal year 2014.

# 4 Science

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## Science

The VCNM Science Plan was finalized in FY14. The final plan outlines on-going and future science opportunities.

The Kane and Two Mile Ranch Research and Stewardship Partnership continues to be active in their research efforts. Implementation of elements of the Partnership's Research Design Plan is ongoing.

VCNM currently has several ongoing scientific efforts. Friends of The Cliffs, for the second year in a row, received an NLCS research grant (\$25,000) to conduct bat, migratory bird, and raptor surveys on the monument. These surveys began in 2013 and continued in 2014. A report of findings will be made available to the BLM in 2015.

Montana State University continued their surveys in Paria Canyon for Mexican spotted owl. No owls were found but habitat was found to be adequate for the owl.

Geologic studies of Navajo sandstone continue in VCNM with particular attention to the Coyote Buttes area. Dr. Gerald Bryant of Dixie State University continues his study in soft-sediment deformation and dune collapse in Navajo sandstone. He plans to present a poster of his research at The Geological Society of America annual meetings in fall of 2014 in Vancouver.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, in partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Service, continues to monitor a transplanted northern leopard frog population in Soap Creek Tank #2 on VCNM. The frogs were introduced there in 2011. The population was again monitored in 2014. To date, monitoring efforts indicate that the introduction has been successful though future maintenance of the pond structure may be needed.

The Peregrine Fund and Arizona Game and Fish Department continue to study California condor mortality causes and methods to decrease human-caused mortality. Lead ingestion and poisoning continues to be the leading cause of condor mortality. The effectiveness of volunteer lead reduction programs is also being studied.

# 5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

## Geology

Sandstone slick rock, rolling plateaus, and brilliant cliffs with arches, amphitheatres, and massive walls.

### Geology Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good                                 | Stable |

### Geology Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 279,566           | 279,566                 | 279,566                 |

## Stressors Affecting Geology

No known stressors are affecting this object.



Coyote Buttes South. Photo by Bob Wick/BLM

## Cultural and Historic Resources

Archaeological evidence displaying a long and rich human history spanning more than 12,000 years. Historic resources, including evidence of early European exploration, ranches, homesteads, mines, and roads.

### Cultural and Historic Resources Status and Trend Table

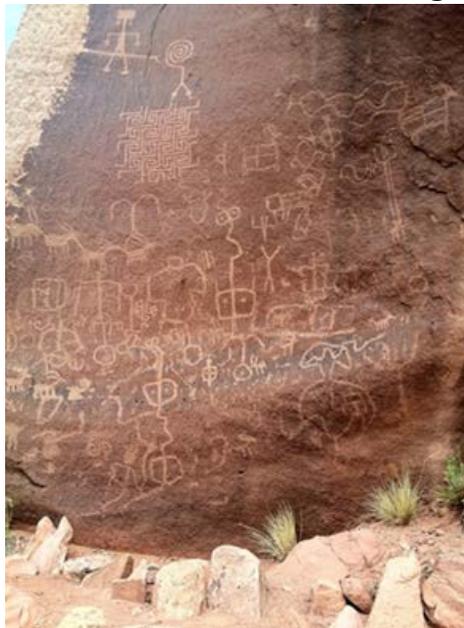
| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good                                 | Stable |

### Cultural and Historic Resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 381               | 279,566                 | 51 sites monitored      |

### Stressors Affecting [name of ROV]

Stressors include illegal excavating, collecting, and vandalizing, off-route motorized vehicle use, and natural deterioration due to erosion and weathering.



Maze Rock Art site

## Wilderness

The Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness is a remote and unspoiled landscape with limited travel corridors along the Utah-Arizona border. A majority of the wilderness lies within Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.

### Wilderness Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good                                 | Stable |

### Wilderness Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 89,598            | 89,598                  | 89,598                  |

## Stressors Affecting Wilderness

Stressors include invasive species along the Paria River riparian corridor, including Russian olive and tamarisk. Illegal incursions into the designated wilderness by off-road vehicles can be an issue.



Paria Canyon. Photo by Bob Wick/BLM

## Vegetation

Cold desert flora and warm desert grassland.

### Vegetation Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good                                 | Stable |

### Vegetation Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 279,566           | 279,566                 | 186,082                 |

## Stressors Affecting Vegetation

Stressors to vegetation include climate change though it is difficult to know what those impacts will be and the degree to which it will impact monument vegetation. Visitor impacts including dispersed camping and illegal off-route vehicle use.



Vermilion Cliffs

## Wildlife

Includes California condors, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, mountain lions, raptors, fish, etc.

### Wildlife Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Fair                                 | Stable |

### Wildlife Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 279,566           | 279,566                 | 279,566                 |



California condor; Photo by Bob Wick/BLM

**Bighorn Sheep Status and Trend Table**

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good                                 | Stable |

**Bighorn Sheep Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14                                 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 279,566       | 58,275            | 58,275                  | 58,275 (last surveyed in 2011, no surveys done in FY14) |

**Mountain Lion Status and Trend Table**

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Fair                                 | Stable |

**Mountain Lion Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 0                 | 243,300 (estimate)      | 0                       |



**Mountain Lion in Paria Canyon Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness**

### Pronghorn Antelope Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Fair                                 | Stable |

### Pronghorn Antelope Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 11,900            | 11,900                  | 11,900                  |

### Raptors Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Good                                 | Stable to Up (species dependent) |

### Raptors Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 18,024            | 279,566                 | 0                       |

### Fish Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend  |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Fair                                 | Stable |

### Fish Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 0                 | 11,900                  | 0                       |

## Stressors Affecting Wildlife

California condor: Lead poisoning.

Bighorn Sheep: Lack of permanent water sources.

Mountain Lion: Lack of permanent water sources.

Pronghorn antelope: impassable fences, vehicular traffic on Highway 89A, lack of permanent water sources.

Raptors: Lead poisoning for golden eagles

Fish: Flash flooding, high water temperatures.

## Paria River

The *Paria River* and widely scattered ephemeral water sources and springs.

### (name of ROV) Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend            |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Fair                                 | Stable to upward |

### (name of ROV) Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279,566       | 33                | 33                      | 5                       |

# 6 Summary of Performance Measure

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Overall, monument resources, objects, or values are in fair to good condition with a stable or upward trend. There were no major disturbances on VCNM in FY14 to negatively impact these values.

| <b>Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table</b> |               |              |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Resource, Object, or Value</b>                          | <b>Status</b> | <b>Trend</b> |
| Geology  | Good          | Stable       |
| Cultural and historical resources                          | Good          | Stable       |
| Wilderness   | Good          | Stable       |
| Vegetation   | Good          | Stable       |
| Wildlife   | Fair-Good     | Stable-Up    |
| Wildlife   | Fair-Good     | Stable-Up    |
| Paria River  | Fair          | Stable-Up    |

# 7

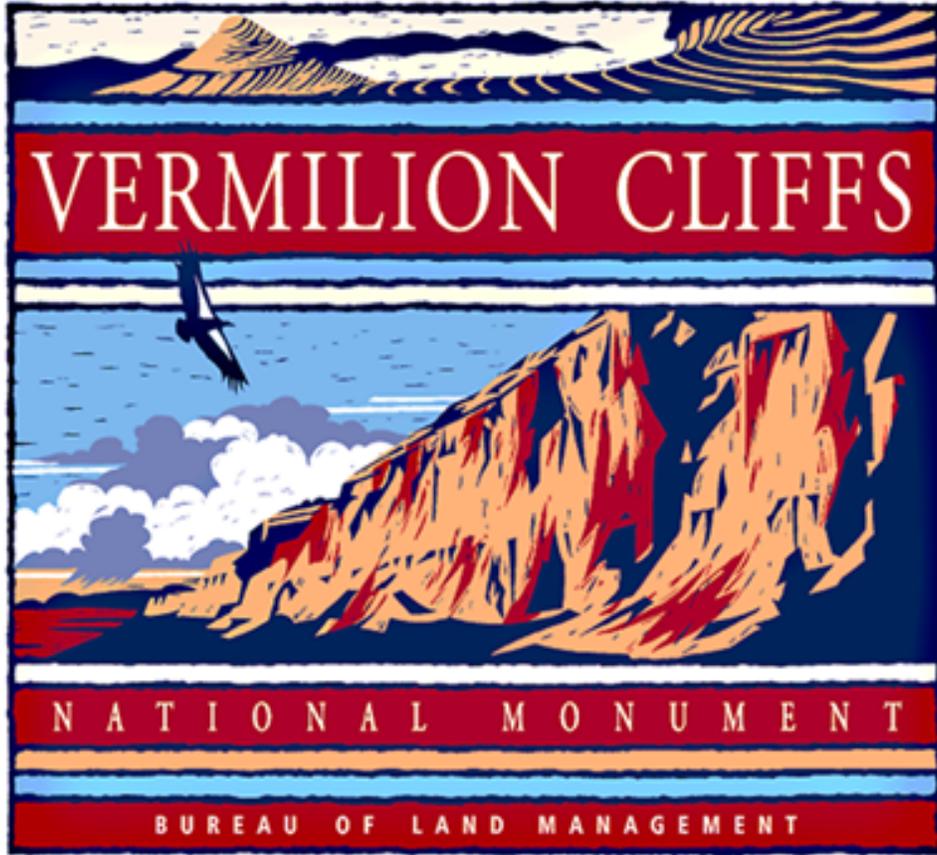
## Manager's Letter

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VCNM had some important milestones in FY14 to move its programs forward. These included finishing the monument's Science Plan and Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Wilderness Baseline Monitoring Report. Visitor safety and safety messaging was improved. The Artist-in-Residence program, sponsored by Friends of The Cliffs, continues to be developed and grow. The Arizona Strip District received state grant monies and VCNM was able to employ two summer seasonal employees to do aid in travel and recreation management.

This momentum will carry through FY15. It is expected that the Friends of The Cliffs' Artist-in-Residence will present her products to the public. Youth will be employed again on VCNM through Southern Utah University's Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative. Through a BLM research grant and in cooperation with Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Colorado Mesa University will be conducting Recreation Experience Baseline Study in the House Rock Valley Road recreation corridor. This study will yield information to help BLM determine visitor expectations of their recreational experience in VCNM and provide insight into visitor use limits in the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area.

One important project that will move VCNM recreation program forward in FY15 is the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area (SMA) Business Plan. This plan will analyze current recreation management and potential adjustment of recreation fees in the SMA. The Business Plan will also disclose potential changes to how permits are delivered online (i.e. Recreation.gov). The goal of these proposed changes is to improve efficiency with administration of the SMA, and improve customer service and safety.



**NATIONAL  
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## **Vermilion Cliffs**

### **National Monument**

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Arizona Strip Office  
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St. George, UT 84790  
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February 2015

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