

ARARA Conservation Committee Report, 2018-2019

The ARARA Conservation Committee last reported in June 2018.

At last year's Conservation Committee meeting we discussed the possibility of doing a service project at Petroglyph National Monument during the Society for American Archaeology conference in Albuquerque. The logistics proved unworkable; however, the good news is that one reason the project was not viable was the large number of conference sessions –four!-- dedicated to rock art research.

Thanks to action on the part of the ARARA board, we now have a setup that will allow emails to go out to members in specific states asking for their comments on state legislation and executive policies that affect rock art sites. As you probably know, members of state legislatures and the US Congress generally do not read or respond to comments that are not from their constituents; thus, the important of giving constituents the opportunity to comment on proposals.

At last year's meeting, the committee decided to adopt the model of the Friends of Cedar Mesa "Visit with Respect" program instead of making printed brochures for rock art site visitors. We are happy to announce the launch of this new initiative. Under the ARARA Visit with Respect program, site visitors will be offered a large, durable tag that can be affixed to a backpack. The tag lists (with pictographic icons) do's and don'ts for visiting archaeological sites and asks site visitors to report any new damage they observe by visiting the ARARA web site. The web site has a form to collect details and photos of the damage. A volunteer will then send the reports along to the appropriate state or federal land-management agency for further action. Our volunteer is travel reporter Lisa Brainard. Lisa plans to provide original articles about the new program to Outdoor Magazine and similar publications. Special thanks to Elanie Moore for designing the tags.

We ask all ARARA conference attendees to help us by delivering a "starter kit" to one or more federal or state agencies that manage rock art sites in their own area. The kits are ready to go—just pick yours up in the vendor room. Please remember to fill out the information sheet with your name, email or phone number, and the places you plan to deliver the kits. That way we can follow up and see what changes we need to make to the program.

In the realm of rock art site management policy, Mike Bies has been representing ARARA CC at a series of planning meetings with signatories and interested parties regarding a bentonite mining operation in western Wyoming in an area containing many rock art sites belonging to the Dinwoody Rock Art Tradition. He has conveyed our recommendation that the BLM implement a two-phase program to mitigate the identified adverse effects to Historic Properties in the proposed project area. During the first phase the BLM will list eligible rock art sites on the National Register of Historic Places using the Multiple-property form previously developed for Dinwoody Tradition Rock Art. During the second phase, the BLM will expand public education efforts using information gleaned during site surveys and monitoring in the mining area. The mining company has objected to paying for additional archaeological site monitoring, but it is anticipated that the BLM will hold them to that requirement.

Mike also represented the Wyoming Professional Archaeologists Association in developing a programmatic agreement regarding cultural resources impacted by a large gas pipeline project in Wyoming. He folded rock art concerns into the larger discussion of the Denbury Riley Ridge to Natrona Project to help develop a plan acceptable to all involved.

From May 27, 2018 through May 18, 2019, committee co-chair, Linea Sundstrom, did the following on behalf of the committee:

- In September 2018, expressed ARARA's support for the proposed alternative, Alternative 1, to prevent damage to rock art and geoglyphs by construction of the Desert Quartzite Solar Project in California, assuming that view-shed issues with rock art and geoglyph sites lying near the area of potential effect will be negotiated with interested and affiliated Native American communities.
- In December 2018, commented on the draft management plan/environmental impact statement for Bears Ears National monument, supporting Option B and requesting that the BLM honor the requests of various organizations for consulting status and asking that the entire area of potential effect be surveyed by professional archaeologists with training or experience in rock art discovery and recording.
- Also in December 2018, submitted comments on the proposed Borderlands Wind Project in western New Mexico, noting that the area contains many rock art sites, including Zuni and Apache or Navajo sites, and asking that any archaeological investigations include crew members who are trained or experienced in best practices for rock art discovery and documentation and stressing the need to include interested Indian tribes in consultations on the project. The comments mentioned the need to address specific impacts including dust, increased visitation, and disruptions to the views and soundscapes of the sites.
- In April 2019, commented on proposed changes that would limit the manner in which sites on federally administered lands can be nomination and listed on the National Register, as follows: *The American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA) represents professional researchers and members of the public in promoting the preservation and understanding of our nation's petroglyphs, rock paintings, and historic inscriptions. Rock art is a unique and irreplaceable historic resource crucial to understanding our ancient and more recent history and heritage. In addition, many American Indian tribal nations consider rock art sites sacred links to their ancestors. On behalf of ARARA's membership, I urge you to reject the proposed changes to the rules for placing historically significant places on the National Register. The current system has the flexibility and freedom from political influence needed to preserve important sites for all Americans. Our historic sites deserve protection based on existing standards and rules that prevent site preservation from becoming an arbitrary, politically charged, or neglected process. Sites on federal lands belong to all Americans, and the National Park Service should continue to provide more than one pathway for sites to receive listing and consideration for protection. Individuals, state historic preservation offices, and tribal historic preservation officials must retain the ability to identify and nominate sites to the*

National Register whether or not a federal agency wants the nomination to proceed. Historic preservation enjoys strong public support. Please honor that support by keeping our NRHP process strong and impartial.

- In May 2019, expressed our concerns and requested interested party status on a large oil and gas development project near Casper, Wyoming. The proposed mineral extraction and pipeline is located near the Castle Gardens site, the Cedar Ridge Traditional Cultural Property, Boysen Reservoir, and other significant rock art sites. The comments ask that decisions not be made until the area is surveyed by archeologists with expertise in rock art site discovery and recording.

Linea also looked into commenting on the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, Arizona, administered by the BLM, but decided to leave that to local groups more familiar with the area.

Despite the Trump Administration's general rollback of regulations on federal lands, agencies took some measures to protect rock art sites:

- In July 2018, the BLM Lander, Wyoming, field office announced plans to increase recreational access to Johnny Behind the Rocks. This involves development of a system of hiking and bike trails. Their management plan addresses concerns expressed in formal comments submitted in June 2018. In specific, trails will be sited to divert traffic away from rock art sites.
- In September 2018, the BLM banned target shooting on 2000 acres west of Utah Lake expressly to protect Fremont rock art in the area.

In the world of public policy,

- In April 2019, US Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich and U.S. Representatives Ben Ray Lujan, Deb Haaland, and Xochitl Torres Small introduced *the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act*, S. 1079, a bill to withdraw the federal lands around Chaco Culture from further mineral development. The bill, alongside anticipated actions from State Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard, would help ensure the protection of Chaco ruins and the greater landscape surrounding the Chaco Canyon National Historical Park by preventing any future leasing or development of minerals owned by the U.S. government that are located within an approximately 10-mile protected radius around Chaco. The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
- The city of Holbrook, Arizona, worked with the National Park Service to develop a management plan for Hidden Cove Petroglyph Park that will allow visitors to safely access the park for hiking, bird-watching, and petroglyph-viewing while protecting the rock art sites from damage.

- Attempts to restore Bears Ears National Monument continue. President Trump issued an executive order in December 2017 dismantling the new national monument. Five federally recognized Indian tribes (Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Zuni, and Ute Mountain Ute) have filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration, arguing that the president has no authority to take such action. Various archaeological organizations have filed amicus briefs in support of restoring protection to the archaeological resources encompassed by Bears Ears NM.



In what can only be described as a massive mess-up, BLM officials inadvertently included site location information for some 899 sites in southwestern Utah in an online post announcing oil and gas leasing opportunities. The information was online for several days in February 2018 before the BLM removed it. Sites involved included rock art sites.

In the good news department, the Utah Rock Art Research Association was able to persuade a mining company to alter its planned gravel extraction after nine petroglyph boulders were discovered in the planned mining area in the West Mountain vicinity. Several professional archaeological surveys had been done in advance of the BLM issuing the mining permit, but they had missed the small rock art sites. Concerned members of the public contacted URARA, which conducted its own survey led by Steve Acerson, president of the organization. The URARA survey discovered 90 boulders containing petroglyphs in and near the proposed gravel mine. The mining company, Kilgore Companies, asked to move the nine boulders that would be destroyed by the mining operation, but in response to URARA's request and public comment decided last fall to leave them in place.

Reports of damage to rock art sites in the US seem to have decreased this year. Perhaps public education and law enforcement efforts are making progress.

- Spray painted graffiti was discovered in Colorado National Monument near Grand Junction in June 2018. The three messages appear to have been a prom invitation. They were placed near, but not over, prehistoric rock art. No arrests have been reported.
- Damage to a Makah-affiliated petroglyph in Olympic National Park near the famous Ozette archaeological site was reported on social media in December 2018. A visitor carved a word, which appears to be the person's name, across part of the petroglyph. No arrests have been reported.
- In May 2019, officials from the Gila National Forest in New Mexico reported vandalism to the Chloride Creek rock art site in the form of graffiti. No arrests have been reported.
- Three other sites on BLM have suffered damage in New Mexico. At the Pony Hills site near Deming, graffiti was spray painted near, but not on, rock art panels. At the Three Rivers site a large "Trump 2020" was scratched into a boulder, but fortunately no rock art was involved. In the Pena Blanca area a mask petroglyph was deliberately scratched over. No arrests have been reported.

We received two nominations this year for the Conservation Award. The winner will be announced at the banquet. Thanks to Shurban, Margaret Berrier, and Mike Bies for serving as the award committee.

Thanks to Margaret Berrier, Troy Scotter, Kelley Hays-Gilpin, Mike Bies, Polly Schaafsma, and Diane Orr for helping the committee this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Linea Sundstrom, Co-Chair
Conservation and Preservation Committee
American Rock Art Research Association
May 20, 2018