



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) wants to hear from you as we begin backcountry planning for Wupatki National Monument. Specifically, we want to gather your ideas on the types of activities you think are appropriate for backcountry areas as well as any concerns you may have.

Every visitor should have a memorable national park experience as well as a seat at the table to help us support long-term, effective planning and decision making. As we explore future opportunities together, we must consider the fundamental resources that make Wupatki so special. These include archeological and historic resources, wildlife habitat and native vegetation, dark night skies and natural quiet, high desert scenery, and open vistas. We also want to apply best practices to explore changes to visitor access and experiences, including using guidance from the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council.

Currently, public access within Wupatki's backcountry is limited to protect the thousands of archeological sites from unacceptable impacts, such as vandalism and artifact collection. We do offer guided hikes led by park staff and volunteers seasonally for small groups (less than 15) to reduce impacts to the sites within those areas. Through your feedback, we hope to explore what future opportunities exist.

Wupatki National Monument was established by President Calvin Coolidge in 1924 to preserve Citadel

This newsletter contains important background information on Wupatki as well as initial ideas for desired conditions and potential activities in the backcountry that we would like your feedback on. This Newsletter also serves to notify the public of proposed backcountry planning under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Under Section 106, the National Park Service must take into account the effects of projects on historic properties. The information provided by the public will be considered during the Section 106 review process.

and Wupatki Pueblos. Monument boundaries have been adjusted several times since then, and now include additional pueblos and other archeological resources. The monument covers 35,254 acres of high desert directly west of the Little Colorado River and the Navajo Nation. Roughly 97 percent of the monument includes backcountry areas or areas that are eligible for wilderness designation. This means these areas are generally undeveloped, without trails and with few roads. We value your interest and appreciate your engagement as this process begins.

Sincerely,  
Kayci Cook Collins  
Superintendent





## Purpose Statement

*The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park and lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.*

The purpose of the monument is to preserve and protect thousands of archeological sites scattered across the stunning landscape of the Painted Desert and the grassland prairies, including several large, prominent pueblos atop fiery red sandstone and black volcanic flows.

## Significance Statements

*Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of the Monument and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.*

**Archeology:** The monument protects one of the most densely populated archeological landscapes of the Southwest, where multiple cultural groups coexisted and interacted in the wake of the eruption of Sunset Crater Volcano.

**Connections from Past to Present:** Natural and cultural resources within the monument are significant to a number of contemporary American Indian tribes, as evidenced by oral history, archeological study, and continuing traditional practices.

**Native Grasslands:** The monument harbors one of the largest protected areas of juniper savanna, grassland, and desert shrubland within the southern Colorado Plateau region. It provides habitat for native species sensitive to human land-use and habitat fragmentation impacts and serves as a critical scientific research area for pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) and regional environmental change.

**Scenery and Setting:** The clean air and environment of the monument provide exceedingly rare opportunities to experience uninterrupted vistas, stunning night skies, and natural sounds in a wilderness environment.

## Fundamental and Other Important Resources and Values

*Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the park purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.*

**Archeological Resources:** The monument contains a dense concentration of prehistoric and historic archeological sites, including pueblos, a ball court, amphitheater, agricultural features, petroglyphs, and associated artifacts, in an exceptional state of preservation that allows ongoing research and interpretation.

**Natural Setting / Wilderness:** The largely undeveloped terrain conveys wilderness values through a sense of solitude, dark night skies, and natural quiet. Sandstone outcrops, grasslands, mesas, buttes, and volcanic hills appear against the backdrop of the Painted Desert and the San Francisco Peaks. This landscape also provides habitat for local wildlife, such as pronghorn, golden eagle, prairie falcon, and the Wupatki pocket mouse.

**Historic Resources:** The historic structures and landscapes include buildings and trail features from the Civilian Conservation Corps and Mission 66 eras of NPS management.



## Desired Conditions

Desired conditions describe visitor experiences and opportunities, resource conditions, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain. They help guide strategies and actions by painting a picture of how an area will look, feel, sound, and function in the future. Below are draft desired conditions that will inform future planning for backcountry areas.

## Draft Desired Conditions

### Cultural Resources

- Wupatki's cultural sites are in a state of protection and conservation as fundamental resources.
- The landscapes and ethnographic resources in and around Wupatki continue to be important to indigenous people in spiritual, historical, and material ways.

### Natural Resources

- The Wupatki backcountry retains its prehistoric and historic character, remaining undeveloped, with natural processes occurring without manipulation.
- The backcountry's juniper savanna, grasslands, and desert shrubland are stable, undisturbed, and provide unique habitats and microclimates for local wildlife and native plant species.

### Visitor Use and Experience

- Visitors have opportunities to experience uninterrupted vistas of desert grasslands, mesas, buttes, the Painted Desert, and volcanic hills.
- The largely undeveloped natural setting provides intimate experiences with resources reflecting wilderness values including natural sounds and smells, dark night skies, and opportunities for solitude.
- Visitors gain a sense of the past through encounters with prehistoric and historic structures, cultural landscapes, and rock images scattered throughout the backcountry, reflecting the lives and cultures of the people who have made Wupatki home.



## Future Backcountry Opportunities

The monument has begun initial conversations about the types of activities that may be appropriate in the backcountry. While the NPS encourages uses related to public enjoyment, opportunities must be compatible with the purpose of the park unit and may not cause unacceptable impacts to resources and values. With this guidance in mind, proposed preliminary opportunities are listed below. Your feedback is important to help us move forward and gain a better idea of our planning scope.

### Potential Activities:

- Offer existing guided Discovery Hikes and expand hikes into new areas
- Provide unguided routes for primitive and unconfined recreation in the backcountry
- Provide for backcountry camping in designated areas
- Investigate options for partners/commercial entities to provide guide services

### Give Us Your Feedback

We would like your observations and responses on the draft desired conditions and potential opportunities that will inform planning for the backcountry. To assist you in developing your comments, please consider the questions below:

1. What do you value about Wupatki's backcountry?
2. What kinds of backcountry experiences would you like to be considered?
3. What strategies do you think could support future backcountry access?
4. What concerns do you have with potential changes to backcountry access?

## How to comment

Wupatki National Monument is asking for public input through January 31, 2020.

During this period, you are encouraged to comment on what you value about backcountry areas and your initial responses to potential backcountry opportunities that are being considered, as well as key desired conditions that will inform future planning.

Please submit your comments at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/wupa>). Once on the website, select "Open for Comment" to provide your thoughts.

## You're Invited

The National Park Service will be hosting an open house event on January 16th, 2020. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss potential opportunities for backcountry areas of Wupatki National Monument, to gather public input, and to respond to questions. Please join us and share your ideas.

Thursday, January 16, 2020  
5:30-7:30pm  
Flagstaff High School Commons  
400 W. Elm Avenue  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

