

General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment Newsletter No. 1 April 2008

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument • New Mexico

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to announce that the National Park Service is beginning to develop a General Management Plan (GMP) to provide guidance for the future of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. The general management plan will establish a general framework for management decision making, including a vision of what people think the monument should be like for the next 15 to 20 years.

The monument does not currently have a general management plan and a planning team has been formed to develop a new one. This team will work closely with federal, state, and local agencies; interested parties; and the public, and we invite you to participate in this planning process.

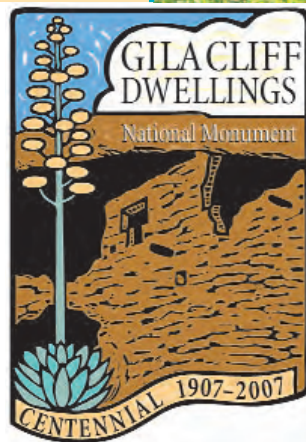
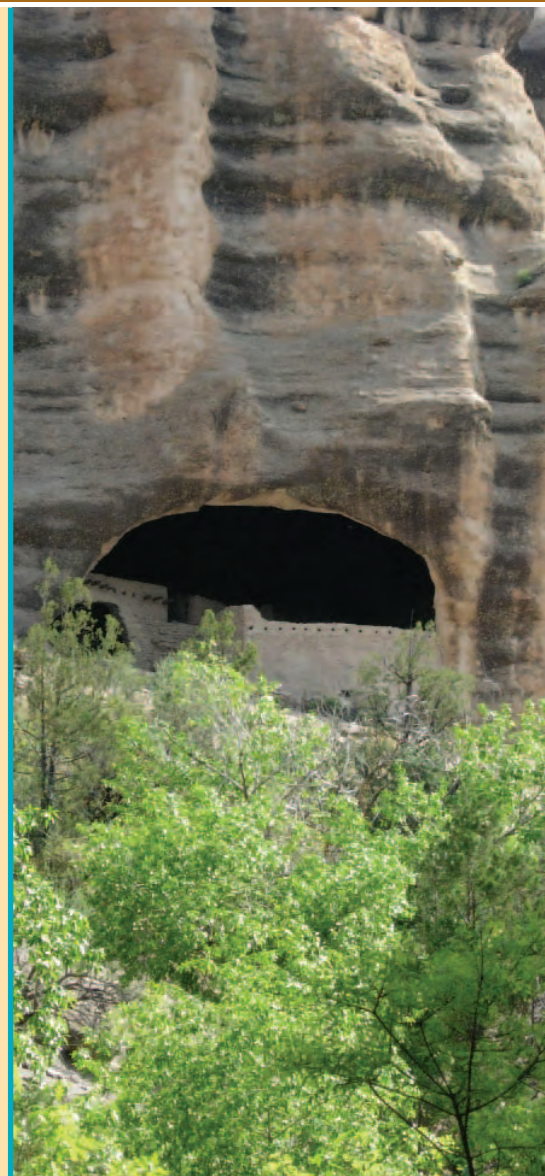
The national park system represents a collection of many of the nation's most outstanding and significant natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources. Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is the only unit of the national park system established to preserve and interpret resources associated with the Mogollon culture.

The purpose of the general management plan is to ensure that current and future NPS managers have a clearly defined direction for protecting resources and providing appropriate public access. Together, the National Park Service, the public, and planning partners will explore ways to answer this question: *What range of resource conditions, visitor experiences, and facilities should be provided, and where?*

You are invited to share your ideas about these and other questions and concerns with the planning team by participating in this process in one of the ways described in this newsletter. Thank you for taking the time to help us plan for the future.

Sincerely,

Steve Riley
Superintendent



Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

Steve Riley, Superintendent
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Silver City, NM 88061

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General Management Planning

Park planning is an ongoing process, and general management planning is the broadest level of decision making for national park system units. General management plans are required for all units in the national park system and are intended to set management direction for the next 15 to 20 years.

A general management plan for Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is being developed by the monument staff and NPS planning professionals with participation by monument partners and the general public. The plan will, among other things, address the following questions:

- What actions must we take to ensure that the monument's resources are protected and preserved in good condition?
- What type of experiences can we provide to help visitors understand and appreciate the monument's resources?
- What levels and types of visitor use are appropriate for the two units of the monument within the surrounding Gila Wilderness?
- How can we work more effectively with partners (Gila National Forest and other interested groups and individuals) to protect the resources and provide quality visitor experiences?

Several possible alternatives for the monument's future will be developed and analyzed before a preferred direction is selected. Evaluating these alternatives enables the planning team to compare the advantages and disadvantages of various courses of action.

As a long-term vision for management of the monument, the general management plan will provide big picture guidance. The plan will not include specific facility designs, resolve all issues, or guarantee funding for actions being proposed.

Monument Overview and Administrative History



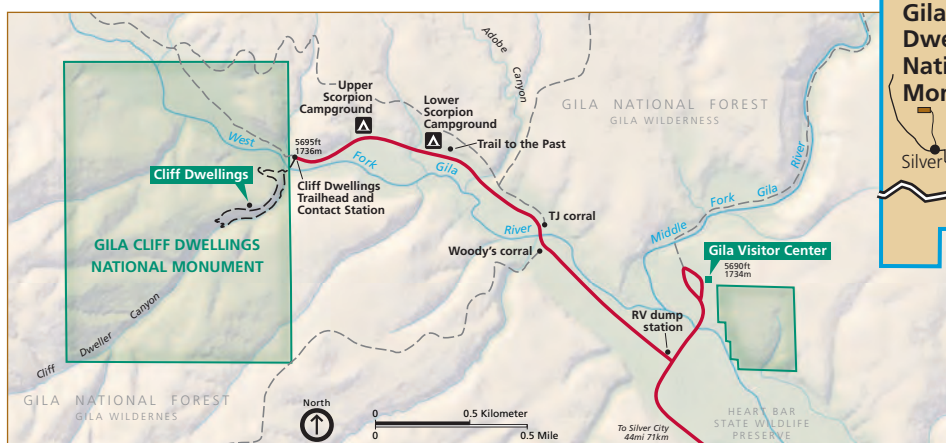
Located in southwest New Mexico, Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument was established in 1907 to preserve the remains of a remarkably intact group of cliff dwellings found in the heart of the 500,000-acre Gila Wilderness. A 1-mile loop trail brings visitors through Cliff Dweller Canyon and into several natural caves containing about 40 rooms built more than 700 years ago.

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is the sole unit in the national park system that was established to protect and interpret remains of the Mogollon culture, one of the three major prehistoric cultures the American Southwest. The 533-acre monument consists of two separate units. The larger includes the cliff dwellings, and the smaller TJ unit, added in 1962, preserves one of the largest and the last known intact Mogollon pueblo from the Classic Mimbres phase.

The cultural resources of the monument contain a collection of archeological sites that include Archaic rock shelters, Early and Late Pithouse and Classic Mimbres phase structures, Tularosa phase cliff dwellings, Salado building foundations, and Apache sites that together represent at least 2,000 years of human occupation of the

Gila River headwaters area. The hunter-gatherer Apaches also became prominent in the region in the 1800s, and their legendary leader, Geronimo, was born near the Gila River headwaters in the early 1820s. The rich diversity of natural resources that supported Archaic, Mogollon, and Apache people in the past continues to thrive in an area that is free from encroaching development, along the banks of New Mexico's last free-flowing river.

Management of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument was initially the responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) from 1907 to 1933; management was then transferred to the National Park Service (NPS). Under a 1975 agreement, management of the monument returned to the Forest Service until 2003. Since then, the monument has been managed by the National Park Service. An interagency agreement provides for NPS and USFS use of area roads and facilities.



Planning Time Frame

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument's general management plan process is expected to take three to four years to complete. A summary of the process and anticipated time frame is presented below. The public will have opportunities to share ideas and comments throughout the process.

Step	Timeframe	Planning Activity	How You Can Be Involved
1	2007	Initiate Project The planning team assembles, defines the project's scope, establishes contacts with participants, and prepares the foundation statement (monument purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and fundamental resources).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read newsletter.
We are Here 2	Spring– Summer 2008	Define Planning Context and Foundation The planning team solicits input from NPS staff, other agencies, organizations, and the public on what the general management plan should focus on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send us your ideas and comments. • Attend a public meeting.
3	Fall 2008– Summer 2009	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives Using staff and public input, the team explores what the monument's future should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives, including a no-action alternative. After consideration of public and agency input, the team decides on the National Park Service's preferred alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read newsletter. • Send us your ideas and comments.
4	Winter 2009– Winter 2010	Prepare a Draft Document <i>A Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment</i> is published. The draft document describes the planning parameters, the alternatives, and the environmental impacts of implementing each alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the draft plan. • Send us your comments. • Attend a public meeting.
5	Spring 2011	Plan Approval Based on review by the National Park Service and the public, the team revises the draft plan. The plan is approved in a published "Finding of No Significant Impact"	
6	Summer 2011 and beyond	Implement the Approved Plan After the plan is approved, and as funding allows, the general management plan is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with monument staff to implement plan.

How You Can Participate

Public participation is crucial to the development of a good general management plan. Throughout the planning process, you will have several opportunities to provide your thoughts and concerns about the future of the monument, comment on preliminary management alternatives, and review the draft management plan. In this phase of the process, we are asking what you value about the monument and what you think are the issues (problems, concerns) facing monument management. We are also asking for your vision — what do you think the monument should be 20 years from now? Your comments would be most useful if submitted by **June 13, 2008**.

You may provide your thoughts and suggestions in several ways. You can

- fill out and mail the enclosed prepaid comment card;
- send a letter to the

**Superintendent
Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
HC 68 Box 100
Silver City, NM 88061-0100**

- review and comment on the NPS planning website (parkplanning.nps.gov/gicl); and/or
- attend our public meetings.

**Monday, June 2, 2008, 7:00 PM
Silco Theater, 311 Bullard St., Silver City**

Planning Framework



The planning framework guides the development of management alternatives. It includes the monument's purpose and significance statements, primary interpretive themes, and fundamental resources.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the monument is the reason for which the monument was established. This statement is based on the monument's enabling legislation and legislative history. Purpose statements are important to planning because they are basic to all other assumptions about the monument and the ways it should be used and managed.

Purpose Statement: Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument protects and interprets remnants of the entire sequence of Mogollon culture for the educational and scientific interests of present and future generations. As the only unit of the national park system established for this purpose, the monument provides visitors ways to connect with one of the three major southwestern cultures of America's prehistoric past.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of a national park system unit is summarized in statements that capture the essence of the park unit's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements describe the distinctive values of the monument's resources, why these values are important within a national context, and why they contribute to the monument's purpose.

Significance Statement #1: Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument protects the largest known Mogollon (Tularosa phase) cliff dwellings complex and provides the public with unparalleled opportunities to walk amongst well-preserved structures built by Mogollon people more than 700 years ago. Architectural features and associated artifacts, including many that predate the dwellings' construction, are exceptionally well preserved within six natural caves of Cliff Dweller Canyon.

Significance Statement #2: The multi-component TJ unit of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument includes one of the last, if not the last, large intact Mogollon (Classic Mimbres phase) pueblo settlements. This site offers outstanding research potential because it retains unusually high integrity due to its unexcavated condition. Surface studies suggest that the TJ site was used from approximately AD 400 to AD 1400.

Significance Statement #3: In addition to modern Pueblo people who claim cultural affiliation with the Mogollon, Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is important to other American Indians throughout the Southwest. This area is the traditional homeland of the Eastern Bands of Chiricahua Apache and remains important to their oral history, traditions, and cultural identity.

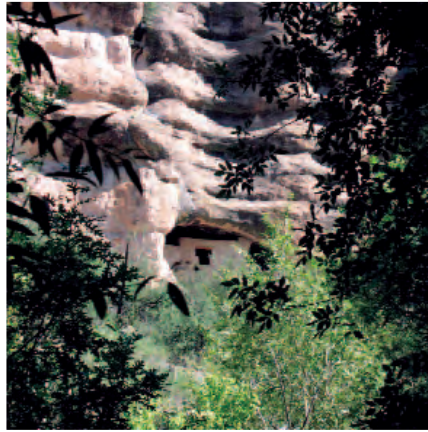
Significance Statement #4: The unique combination of caves, springs, and rivers, and the resulting diversity of plants and animals in and around Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument provided an excellent location for sustaining thousands of years of human use. The cultural resources of the monument are preserved within their natural prehistoric and historic settings due to their remoteness and location within the Gila Wilderness — the world's first designated wilderness area.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes capture the most important ideas or concepts to be communicated to the public about Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument and are used to guide the monument's interpretation and education program. Following are the primary interpretive themes for the monument.



Immersion within the diverse natural resources and wild, rugged beauty of the Gila River headwaters area heightens awareness of the interdependent relationships of people to this land, and the importance of the natural environment to the human experience — from survival to cultural identity to recreation to stewardship.



Exploring the caves and rooms of the Gila Cliff Dwellings provides uniquely intimate opportunities for first-hand discovery and contemplation of what life was like for people in the past here, and the chance to compare similarities and differences to our lifestyles today.



This place, with its great diversity of archeological sites and the oral traditions associated with it, provides insights into the ways that knowledge is acquired, interpreted, preserved, and shared.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources or values are those that warrant primary or other special consideration during planning because they are critical to achieving the monument's purpose and maintaining its significance. Other resources or values are identified that are otherwise important to planning and management.

Archeological Resources

- Forty-five prehistoric sites have been documented within the 533 acres of the monument. They fall into the following categories: pithouse sites, pithouse/pueblo sites, pueblo sites, rock shelters, artifact scatters, and specialized sites.
- The monument's archeological sites and associated artifacts provide evidence of long-term human use of the area, especially by the Mogollon culture. The continuum of archeological resources includes Archaic rock shelters, Early and Late Pithouse and Classic Mimbres phase structures, Tularosa phase cliff dwellings, Salado-influenced building foundations, and Apache artifacts.
- The Gila Cliff Dwellings are the remarkably intact remains of a Tularosa Mogollon cliff village, occupied from roughly AD 1275 to AD 1300. The dwellings include intact architectural features, ceramics, floral remains, faunal remains, and numerous other artifacts. These dwellings represent the final period of occupation of the caves.
- The TJ site preserves the largest known intact Classic Mimbres Mogollon settlement. Part of the pueblo may have been more than one story tall.



- In addition to the 200-room pueblo, the TJ site includes seven older pit structures, one of which may be a great kiva, and a younger Salado component in one of the five room blocks. It is the most significant stratified site known to exist in the Gila River headwaters area, occupied from approximately AD 400 to AD 1400.
- Unusually high concentrations of artifacts, mostly lithics and ceramics, were once scattered across the surface of the TJ site, but many years of thoughtless collecting has left only fewer and smaller pieces, reducing our ability to learn about those people who occupied the site over many centuries.

Scientific Value



- The many components of the TJ site and the remarkably intact cliff dwellings offer outstanding opportunities for ongoing and future scientific inquiry, such as site stratification and construction techniques preserved in original architectural features.
- The unexcavated TJ site could serve as a showcase for noninvasive archeological investigative techniques.
- Because a regional overview of the Mogollon culture has yet to be compiled, opportunities exist for interagency partnership and sharing of knowledge in order to place the resources of the monument into context with other Mogollon sites in the Southwest and with sites related to other major prehistoric cultures.
- The variety of cultural resources provides several topics for archeological and anthropological study, including how cultures in the prehistoric Southwest developed, adapted, assimilated, and dissipated.
- Oral history collected from traditionally connected tribes can help our understanding and appreciation of ancient ways as well as inform management decisions relating to sacred areas and other important resources.
- Comparisons of natural resources found in the area today with remains of stones, plants, and animals found within the archeological record may provide opportunities for ethnobiological studies. These resources can also be used to gauge the impact of climate change over time.

Natural Setting

- The monument sits at the intersection of three major ecological provinces — the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Madre Mountains, and the Chihuahuan Desert. The resulting rich diversity of plants and animals, together with a unique combination of geophysical and hydrological processes, attracted and sustained Native Americans for at least 2,000 years.
- Several large natural caves eroded from a south-facing cliff of Gila Conglomerate were ideal for habitation and construction of the Gila Cliff Dwellings, as well as the long-term preservation of associated artifacts.
- The TJ site is near the confluence of the Middle and West forks of the Gila River, which may have been used as major transportation corridors.
- The perennial Cliff Dwellers Creek was a dependable water source for many generations of native people, and the West Fork of the Gila River — New Mexico's last free-flowing river — travels through a section of the monument.



Interpretation and Visitor Experience



- As the only national park system unit established to protect and interpret the Mogollon culture, the monument has the opportunity and responsibility to tell the fullest version possible of the least understood major culture of the prehistoric Southwest.
- The monument provides opportunities for visitors to have a more intimate experience with archeological resources than most ancient southwestern sites, resulting in more imaginative and personal insights to the past.
- The trail used by visitors to access the dwellings also exposes them to several different habitat zones (riparian, dry rocky slopes, pine forests) that provided many of the raw materials needed for survival by the cliff dwellers.
- Intact ancient structures and landscapes, along with museum exhibits and live demonstrations of dances and crafts at the monument, allow visitors to learn about, appreciate, and make personal connections to ancient and modern native people.
- Interpretation of the TJ unit can highlight both its importance in the overall story of the Mogollon culture and the importance of it remaining in a state of preservation with minimal impact. The TJ site could serve as a

showcase for creative interpretation of an unexcavated site and noninvasive archeological investigative techniques.

- The monument provides an opportunity to interpret the greater Chiricahua Apache culture and its connection to the Gila River headwaters area.
- The monument and the surrounding Gila Wilderness provide opportunities to interpret human use of natural resources, a story that goes back at least 2,000 years at the monument.

Other Important Resources and Values

Cultural Identity



- Four American Indian pueblos (Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Laguna) have cultural affiliation with the Mogollon people, and some may wish to use the monument for traditional uses and/or share stories about their connections to the sites.
- The Eastern Bands of the Chiricahua Apache recognize the Gila River headwaters area as their traditional homeland and consider the mountain ranges to be both spiritually and culturally important to their people.

Wilderness Character



- The wilderness character of the Gila River headwaters area is important in maintaining the monument's natural setting and visitor experience and in protecting its fundamental resources.
- Pristine views, natural soundscapes, opportunities for solitude, and the unimpaired natural condition of the area allow visitors to imagine and appreciate the way of life for people in the prehistoric past.
- The night sky of the area, one of the darkest in the country, is excellent for star gazing because of its remoteness from the artificial light of cities, a characteristic that is becoming increasingly rare throughout the world, even in many of America's larger national parks.