



**SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST  
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DURANGO, CO 81301**

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## Chimney Rock National Monument

### *QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

On September 21, 2012, President Obama signed a proclamation establishing Chimney Rock as a National Monument on the San Juan National Forest in southwestern Colorado. The designation was made under the Antiquities Act with bi-partisan support from Colorado officials, Native Americans, local businesses and other stakeholders. Chimney Rock National Monument is the seventh national monument managed by the U.S. Forest Service in collaboration with tribal, community, state and federal partners. Chimney Rock was the third national monument designated by President Obama using the Antiquities Act. First exercised by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 to designate Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming, the Antiquities Act has been used by 16 presidents since then to protect unique natural and historic features, including the Grand Canyon, Statue of Liberty, and Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients.

#### **1. What is the acreage of Chimney Rock National Monument?**

Chimney Rock National Monument encompasses 4,726 acres of the San Juan National Forest. No private lands are included within this area, although there are limited areas of split-estate property with private subsurface rights. The National Monument features more than 150 cultural resources, mostly dating to the Pueblo II period. All eight identified site groups associated with the Pueblo II occupation at Chimney Rock, including Peterson Mesa, are included within the monument boundary. Many significant sites are located on Peterson Mesa, including a Chacoan style Great House; this area was probably used for viewing/sighting important astronomical observations.

Managing this significant Pueblo II community as a unit enhances research opportunities and understanding of Chimney Rock.

**2. How does the U.S. Forest Service manage Chimney Rock National Monument?**

The San Juan National Forest Pagosa Ranger District manages Chimney Rock in partnership with the nonprofit Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA), which provides tours, special programs and operates a small visitor center from May to September under a Special Use Permit for Campground and Related Granger-Thye Concessions. CRIA collects minimal fees and sell some gift items and books to help meet their costs. They also use fees to help fund research and stabilization efforts at the site. The USFS and its local volunteers have been interpreting the site to the public for the last 17 years.

**3. Does the USFS expect any significant changes to management of this site as a National Monument?**

The most significant changes will come in response to increased visitation and visitor expectations. This may require some expansion of existing interpretive facilities and possibly additional recreational facilities, such as foot paths or trails. The proclamation requires preparing a Management Plan for the National Monument within three years. This process will involve working with tribes, other stakeholders, and the general public. The plan will give guidance on future development, interpretation, research, transportation, vegetation management, recreation and other uses within the Monument.

**4. Why is Chimney Rock managed under the National Forest System?**

The USFS currently manages six national monuments nationwide. Managing cultural resources falls within the USFS mandate and is well within the agency's capabilities. Current USFS management of Chimney Rock, in collaboration with the non-profit Chimney Rock Interpretive Association, has helped the site gain the recognition and the reputation it currently has as an interpretive area and demonstrates the ability of the USFS to manage this archeological resource. The San Juan National Forest also manages public lands adjacent to Chimney Rock. Many visitors to the site provide comments expressing their appreciation for an approach that provides an alternative to regional National Park Service units.

**5. How does Chimney Rock affect the economies of nearby communities?**

Approximately 12,000 visitors currently visit Chimney Rock annually, and the recent national monument designation is expected to increase its visibility. Additional visitors bring additional tourist dollars into the economy. The Forest Service has estimated that monument designation may increase annual visitation 20 - 60% and bring an additional \$18,000 - \$98,000 to the local economy. This model used comparatively conservative estimates of visitor spending. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has prepared a study which indicates that current visitation has a substantially higher impact on the

local economy (\$1.2 million/year) and that visitation could double; its study indicates that within five years the local economic impact could double to \$2.4 million/year.

**6. Why did Chimney Rock warrant designation as a National Monument?**

Chimney Rock Archaeological Area provides insights into the Chaco Culture, a prehistoric society which created monumental architecture and a remarkable regional system in the American Southwest. Chimney Rock has been called the “ultimate outlier,” recognition that this spectacular site has the potential to yield significant information about the larger Chacoan system and how disperse populations were incorporated into it. Archaeologists hypothesize that some of the power possessed by leaders in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, may have come from their possession of astronomical knowledge, including that reflected at Chimney Rock. Chimney Rock shares many of the same architectural and cultural attributes as other Chacoan Outliers; however, in many respects it is more exciting than other outliers, because its integration with the spectacular landscape and archaeo-astronomical features.

**7. How does National Monument designation protect the existing resources of Chimney Rock?**

National monument designation can only be removed through an Act of Congress, while administrative designations available to the USFS are subject to change. Although the USFS has recognized and managed Chimney Rock for its archaeological resources since the 1970s, changes in future management direction could enhance our ability to protect the resources within the Monument boundaries.

**8. How does Chimney Rock relate to other archaeological sites in the Four Corners area?**

The Monument features archaeological resources showing occupation in the late A.D. 800s, with most intensive occupation occurring during the Chaco florescence during the Pueblo II period (A.D. 900-1125). Chimney Rock has been called the “ultimate outlier,” as it provides an excellent example of a Chacoan outlier; and can provide information on a broad range of issues ranging from prehistoric economics to astronomy and their interrelationships. The Chimney Rock community was on the northeastern edge of the larger Chaco world that began to coalesce in the late A.D. 900s, and most sites within Chimney Rock National Monument date to the Pueblo II period.

**9. How are Native American tribes involved in the National Monument?**

The Forest Service actively consults with 24 tribes which claim cultural affiliation to the site. The agency will continue to work closely with tribes regarding management decisions. Tribal people continue to visit the site.

**10. Is grazing allowed in the National Monument?**

The Peterson Gulch/Mesa area is included in the Turkey Grazing Allotment, which is active. The rest of the area is not within a current grazing allotment. The Turkey allotment is permitted for 127 cow-calf pairs from June 1 to June 30 annually, which equals 168 Animal Unit Months. It is fully stocked at this level. The Peterson Mesa area

represents less than 25% of the Turkey Allotment. Legislative proposals have included provisions for grazing in the areas where it has existed prior to designation.

**11. Can mining or fluid mineral extraction take place within the National Monument?**

There are a few areas within the National Monument that were leased (for oil and gas development) prior to designation; these leases will be honored. Most of these areas were already classified as “no surface occupancy” and the many significant archaeological resources would make large-scale development unlikely. Federal lands within the Monument, not already leased, were withdrawn from leasing and patent under mining laws when the area was designated as a monument.

**12. Will fuels treatment take place in the National Monument?**

Vegetative management treatments will continue to be used to address the risk of wildfire, insects, or diseases that could endanger the natural and cultural resources or threaten public safety. In order to manage for healthy forests and reduce the risk of severe fire and/or insect-caused mortality, it will be necessary to conduct thinning or prescribed burning with some periodic removal of timber or biomass. Reducing the risk of severe wildfire is a critical factor in protecting the area’s cultural resources. In terms of commercial harvesting opportunities, the National Monument is not within the timber management emphasis area as defined in the San Juan National Forest Resource Management Plan.

**13. What types of recreational activities are allowed in the National Monument?**

Current recreational opportunities include archaeological visitation, astronomical and geological interpretation activities, hiking, bicycling, hunting, horseback riding, cross - country skiing and snowshoeing. The USFS anticipates these multiple-use opportunities continuing; however, off-road use of motorized vehicles is currently prohibited.

**14. What interpretive and educational services are offered at Chimney Rock?**

As a well-preserved, stabilized site, Chimney Rock is well suited for visitation and interpretation. Visitors can imagine what it might have been like to live at the site one thousand years ago. Up to this point, the interpretive program at Chimney Rock has been largely staffed with volunteers from the nonprofit Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA), which annually provides tours, special programs and operates a small visitor center from May to September. CRIA serves approximately 8,000 visitors annually (an estimated 4,000 visitors enjoy the site during the off-season). In addition, Native American dances, have been held at the site annually for 17 years and highlight the continued importance of the site to native people.

Recent research at Chimney Rock, including surveys, fill-reduction excavations conducted by the University of Colorado, architectural documentation, and geophysical survey conducted by Colorado School of Mines, has provided educational opportunities to university students. Although additional staffing needs might develop, the USFS anticipates continuing to work with its dedicated volunteers to provide services in the

future. Future management/staffing decisions will be addressed in the management plan.

**15. What makes Chimney Rock unique in southwestern archaeology?**

Part of what makes Chimney Rock unique is that its archaeological resources are grouped in a compact area so that interrelationships between culture, geology and the natural world can be studied in a setting which has not been substantially re-settled since the Pueblo II period, leaving appreciable evidence available to researchers. The site differs from Mesa Verde in that it represents a different period of Ancestral Puebloan occupation and from Chaco Canyon in that it is an outlier, and offers insight on how the Chacoan Phenomenon was experienced outside of the core area.

Geological features, astronomy, and archaeology intersect at Chimney Rock. The dramatic pinnacles of Chimney Rock and Companion Rock are visible from all the Ancestral Puebloan villages identified within the proposed monument. It has been suggested that the proximity to the pinnacles and alignments viewed through them is one reason for the Chacoan influence at Chimney Rock. The importance of astronomical alignments has been explored by many researchers. The best known archaeo-astronomical alignment at Chimney Rock is the northern lunar standstill, during which the moonrise can be seen between the pinnacles from the Great House Pueblo at 18.6 year cycles. The two recognized construction phases at the Great House Pueblo in AD1076 and AD1093 coincide with lunar standstills. Other recognized alignments include alignments marking the summer and winter solstice, the fall and spring equinox, and the Crab Nebula (Taurus Supernova of 1054 AD).

**16. How is research allowed within the National Monument?**

Archaeological research on federal lands must adhere to series of regulations including the Antiquities Act (1906), National Historic Preservation Act (1966, with subsequent amendments), Archaeological Resources Protection Act (1979), and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1992). Regardless of designation, research is subject to federal laws. The management plan will provide additional guidance.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:** [www.chimneyrockco.org/mainnew.htm](http://www.chimneyrockco.org/mainnew.htm)