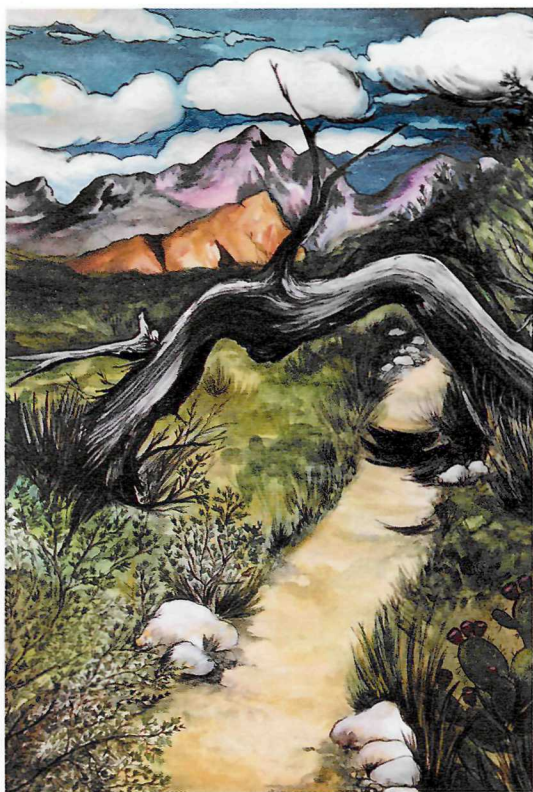


Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and was established in 2014 to protect the area's visual, cultural, geological, paleontological, ecological, and scientific resources. The monument is 496,330 acres and includes four areas: the Organ Mountains, Desert Peaks, Potrillo Mountains, and Doña Ana Mountains.

The **Organ Mountains** are a steep, angular mountain range with rocky spires that jut above the Chihuahuan Desert floor to an elevation of 9,000 feet. The peaks, narrow canyons, and open woodlands range from Chihuahuan Desert habitat to ponderosa pine in the highest elevations. Located on the east side of Las Cruces, this area provides opportunities for photography, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, camping, and wildlife viewing.

The **Desert Peaks** include the Robledo Mountains and the Sierra de las Uvas, characterized by desert mountains rising steeply from flat plains. The **Potrillo Mountains** are the most remote section of the monument and are comprised of a volcanic landscape of cinder cones, lava flows, and craters. The **Doña Ana Mountains** have extensive hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking trails, as well as rock climbing and off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes.

Know Before You Go

Weather in the monument can change quickly. From June to September during monsoon season, thunderstorms can cause flash floods. Make sure to carry water, snacks, a first-aid kit, and sunscreen on any outing. Practice Leave No Trace principles. **Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.**



WATER. Drink at least one gallon per day if you are hiking. Water is available at Dripping Springs Natural Area and Aguirre Spring Campground Host Site.



DOGS ON A LEASH. Pets are permitted in the monument but restricted on some trails. Pets must be on a leash in developed areas.



WATCH FOR WILDLIFE. Rattlesnakes, mountain lions, and coyotes live in this area. Be cautious of your surroundings and be respectful of wildlife.



WILDERNESS. Motorized and mechanized use, including mountain bikes, are prohibited in designated wilderness areas. Drones are prohibited within designated wilderness areas.



FLASH FLOODS. Monsoons can cause unexpected flash floods. If there are storm clouds above or on the horizon be cautious and do not travel in arroyos or waterways. Roads may become impassable when wet.



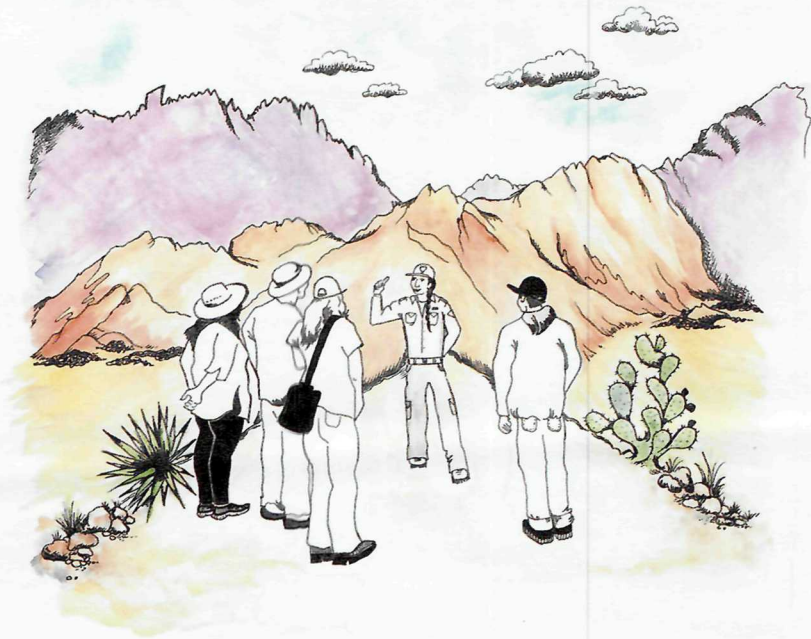
ROAD USE. Passenger vehicles and OHVs are limited to designated routes. Please be advised many routes require high clearance and 4x4 capabilities.

A Legacy of Wild Land

In January 2014, through Presidential proclamation under the Antiquities Act, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks was established as a national monument to protect and conserve the cultural and environmental heritage of the area for future generations to come.

The proclamation declared,

"The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks area is important for its ruggedly beautiful landscape and the significant scientific, historic, and prehistoric resources found there. The abundant resources testify to over 10,000 years of vibrant and diverse human history of many peoples. Objects left behind by this multi-layered history and spread throughout this geologically and ecologically diverse landscape enhance the experience of visitors to the area and represent a vital resource for paleontologists, archaeologists, geologists, biologists, and historians."

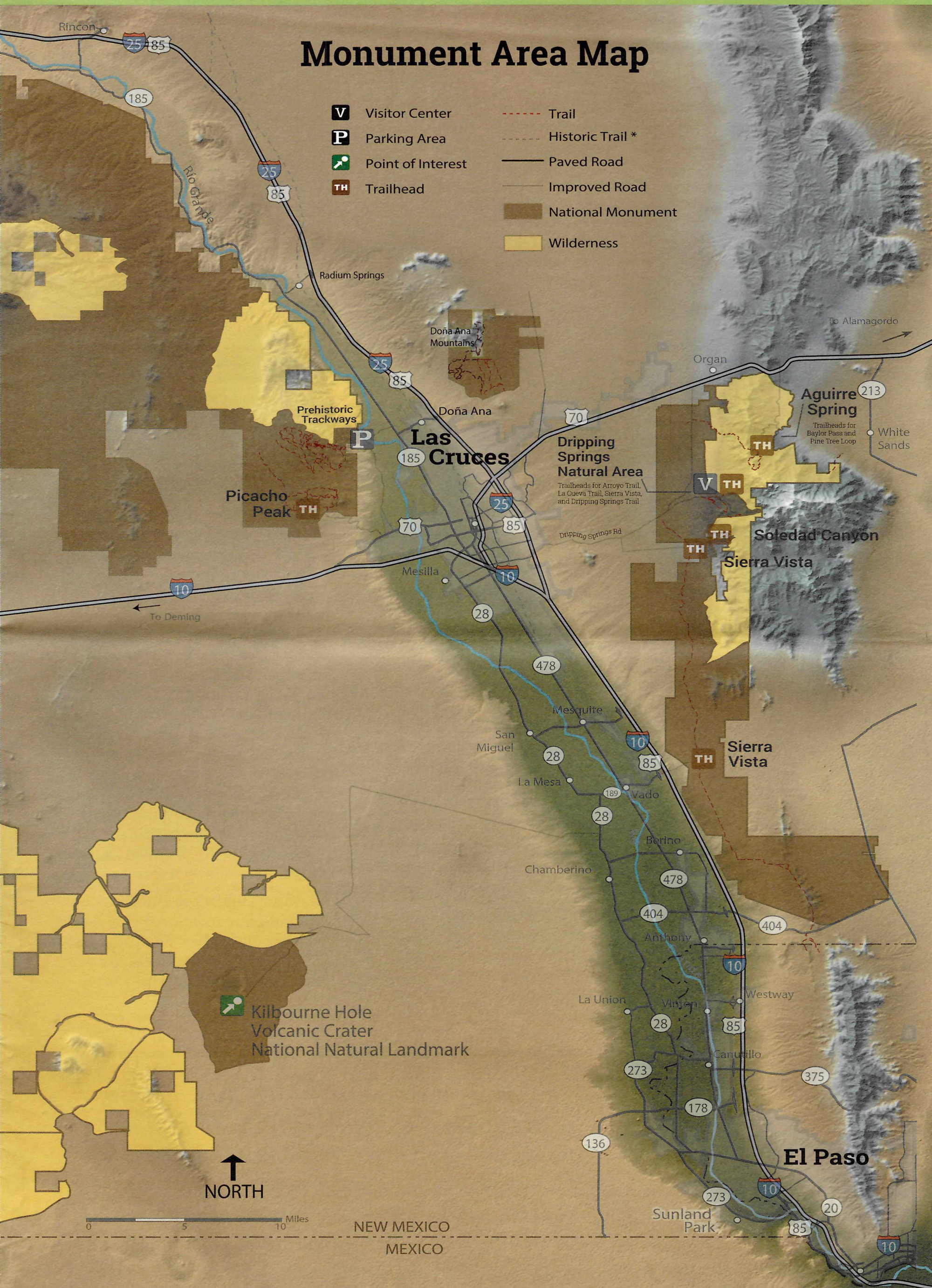


A local, multi-generational community in Las Cruces led the effort to protect this area to conserve the land and the history it holds. The monument is a testimony to the community's effort to protect the area around them. The monument embodies a legacy of western conservation efforts to protect our wild landscapes.

Major Hiking Trails

The monument has over forty miles of National Recreation Trails. These trails include the Sierra Vista Trail, Pine Tree Trail, Baylor Pass Trail, Bar Canyon Trail, Picacho Peak, and trails within the Dripping Springs Natural Area. There are trails for hikers of all levels. See the grid below for popular trails in the monument.

Trail Name	Distance	Time	Elevation Gain	Description
Easy: Minimal uphill sections and some uneven terrain.				
Arroyo Trail	0.6 mi. one-way	30 min.	170 ft.	Beginning from the La Cueva Group Site, the trail takes you through a riparian ecosystem. This is a great trail for birders.
La Cueva Trail	1.8 mi. out and back	1 hr.	335 ft.	Begin at either the A.B. Cox Visitor Center or the upper La Cueva parking lot. The trail takes you to the La Cueva rock shelter. Great views of the Mesilla Valley. Please respect this cultural site and stay on the platform when inside the shelter.
Moderate: Uphill sections including up to 500 ft. of elevation gain; single digit mileage; uneven terrain and some rock scrambling.				
Bar Canyon Trail	2.7 mi. loop	1.5 hrs.	580 ft.	Trailhead located at the Soledad Canyon Day-Use area. Trail is a moderate climb up into Bar Canyon with views of Soledad Canyon and the Mesilla Valley.
Dripping Springs Trail	3 mi. out and back	1.5 hrs.	450 ft.	Trail begins at the A.B. Cox Visitor Center. Follow a slightly sloping path to Van Patten's Mountain Camp and other historic buildings into a shaded canyon. Depending on the season, you may see signs of a waterfall or water dripping through a pipe near the end of the trail. Dogs are not allowed on the majority of this trail.
Baylor Pass Trail	5.5 mi. out and	6 hrs.	800 ft.	Trail can be accessed from Aguirre Spring Campground or from west of Baylor Canyon Rd. The hike leads to the other side of the mountains through Baylor Pass.
Sierra Vista Trail	29 mi. out and back	15 hrs.	1,940 ft.	Trail can be accessed from several points between Drippings Springs Rd and NM 404. The main two northern trailheads can be found off Dripping Springs Rd and Soledad Canyon Rd. There is moderately flat hiking with the trail traveling in and out of arroyos along the foothills of the Organ Mountains. Great views of the Mesilla Valley and the mountain ranges around Las Cruces.
Difficult: Generally, lots of uphill sections; possibly more than 1,000 ft. of elevation gain; double digit mileage and/or difficult terrain and rock scrambling.				
Pine Tree Loop	4 mi. loop	4 hrs.	1,050 ft.	Trailhead located at the Aguirre Spring Campground. This moderately high-elevation moderately strenuous trail winds its way near the base of the magnificent peaks of the Organ Mountains and stands of ponderosa pine. Once you reach the halfway point, it is almost all downhill from there. Rewarding trail with Ponderosa Pines and great views just below the Organ Needles.
Picacho Peak Trail	2.1 mi. out and back	2 hrs.	764 ft.	Picacho Peak Recreation Area is located on the East Mesa behind the Picacho Hills neighborhood. There are several trails in the area but the most popular is the steep hike to the summit of Picacho Peak. Great views of Mesilla Valley and the Organ Mountains.



Plan Your Adventure

In addition to hiking, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument offers a variety of recreation experiences including biking, climbing, camping and more. The monument's developed recreation sites include the Dripping Springs Natural Area and the Aguirre Spring Recreation Area. There are also vast, undeveloped areas that allow for unique outdoor experiences.

There are many ways to enjoy the land. Here are a few ideas and special places to visit:



Biking

Rugged monument vistas offer biking opportunities for both amateurs and enthusiasts. In the **Doña Ana Mountains**, bikers can roller coaster through creosote bush on the 8.8-mile Rabbit Run Loop and the 7.7-mile Doña Ana Loop Ride. Running parallel to the west of the Organ Mountains, the Sierra Vista Trail offers 29 miles of mountain panoramas, desert landscapes, and views of the Mesilla Valley. Riders can hop on the trail at one of five trailheads: Sierra Vista Norte, Talavera, Mesquite, Vado, and NM 404. In addition to riding, many bikers enjoy "bikepacking" trails and camping along the way. With rough terrain consisting of brush, cacti, and rocks, be sure to carry adequate supplies to deal with a punctured tire or slipped chains on your bike.

Off-Highway Vehicle Riding

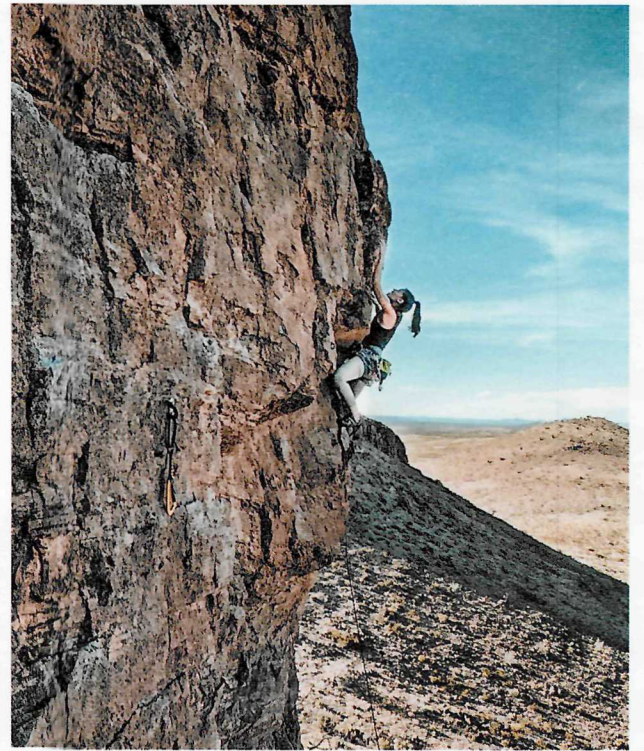
The Robledo Mountains Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail System is a network of trails in the southern Robledo Mountains. Trails are dominated by enormous rocks, making the terrain challenging for riders. These trails require specialized vehicles, with locking differentials, winches, and expert drivers. Vehicle damage is not uncommon. Other OHV areas in the monument include Picacho Peak Recreation Area and the Doña Ana Mountains.



Camping

Within the monument, Aguirre Spring Recreation Area offers a developed campground with 55 first come, first served campsites, as well as picnic tables, fire rings, and pit toilets. There are also two group sites at the recreation area that can be reserved by calling the Las Cruces District Office. Across the monument, there are plenty more opportunities for dispersed camping. Dispersed camping, or camping outside of a developed campground, is permitted except within posted day-use sites or within 300 yards of a water source.

Practice Leave No Trace principles when in the backcountry by camping on durable surfaces, putting out campfires completely, and carrying your garbage out with you.



Liz Soto climbing, photo by Johana Butler

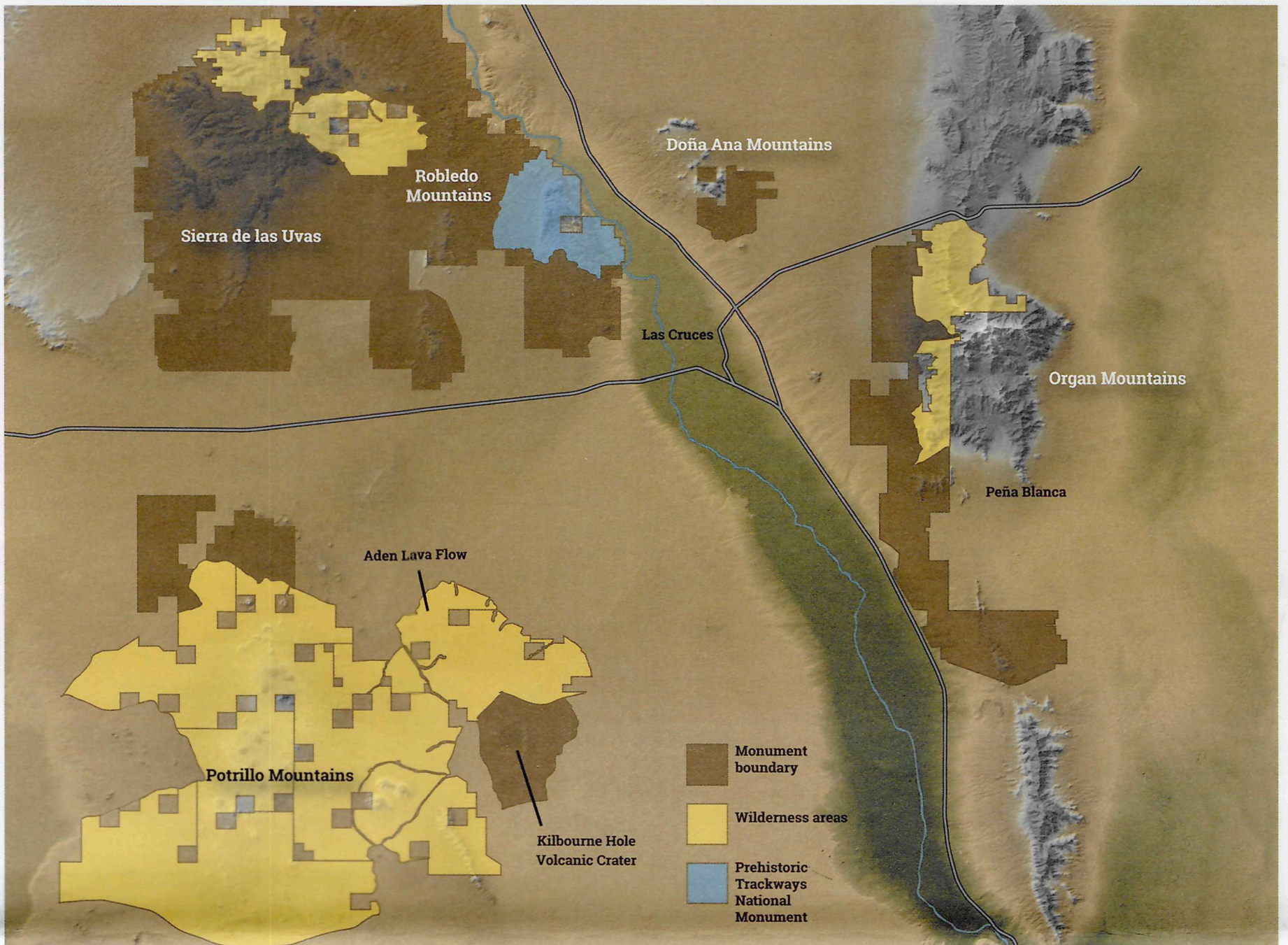
Climbing

Rock climbing and bouldering opportunities in the monument are not well-known, except to local climbers. If you want to climb in uncrowded areas and don't mind hiking, these off-the-beaten-path spots, are worth it. You can see stunning vistas of the Chihuahuan Desert as you climb in the Rough and Ready Hills as well as in the Organ Mountains Wilderness on Sugarloaf Peak. However, it is important to plan ahead and prepare for your adventure. Cell phone coverage can be spotty and the approach to some of the routes requires a strenuous trek away from your vehicle. Please be aware of where you climb to prevent destruction and damage of rock art and other culturally sensitive sites. No permits are required except for organized climbing events. Call the Las Cruces office at 575-525-4300 to learn about the permitting process.

Please note that the monument does not maintain any climbing routes and does not allow the establishment of any new routes within the monument. For more information, contact the Las Cruces District Office.

The Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument is filled with adventures. Like an earthbound constellation, its four sections serve as an outdoor lover's cardinal directions surrounding Las Cruces. Within them, you'll find everything from volcanic landscapes to rocky peaks, narrow canyons, wildflowers, ponderosa pines, and the Dripping Springs Natural Area. Only by exploring will you discover their hidden gems.

--David Soules, local conservationist



Kilbourne Hole

See what remains from an ancient volcanic eruption at this National Natural Landmark. It measures close to two miles across both ways and hundreds of feet deep. It was utilized as a training area for astronauts of Apollo 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17.



Aden Lava Flow

This area contains an extinct shield volcano that was last active between 22 and 15 thousand years ago. A fossilized ground sloth was discovered here in 1929 and is currently at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven, CT.



Peña Blanca

This is a unique archaeological location with evidence of past cultures. In the 1980's, archaeologists excavated caves in the area and found evidence of one the earliest uses of corn in the United States. The area is also a popular spot for bouldering.

Leave No Trace

Visitors help protect wild areas by making conscientious choices and minimizing their personal impact. By following Leave No Trace principles, you help ensure that public lands remain intact for future generations.

1. Plan ahead and prepare:

Plan ahead and bring the right supplies.

2. Travel and camp on a durable surface:

Stay on the trail and camp on established sites.

3. Dispose of waste properly:

Bring all of your trash out with you, including human waste.

4. Leave what you find:

Leave natural and archaeological items where you found them.

5. Minimize campfire impacts:

Only burn fires where allowed and make sure to put them out.

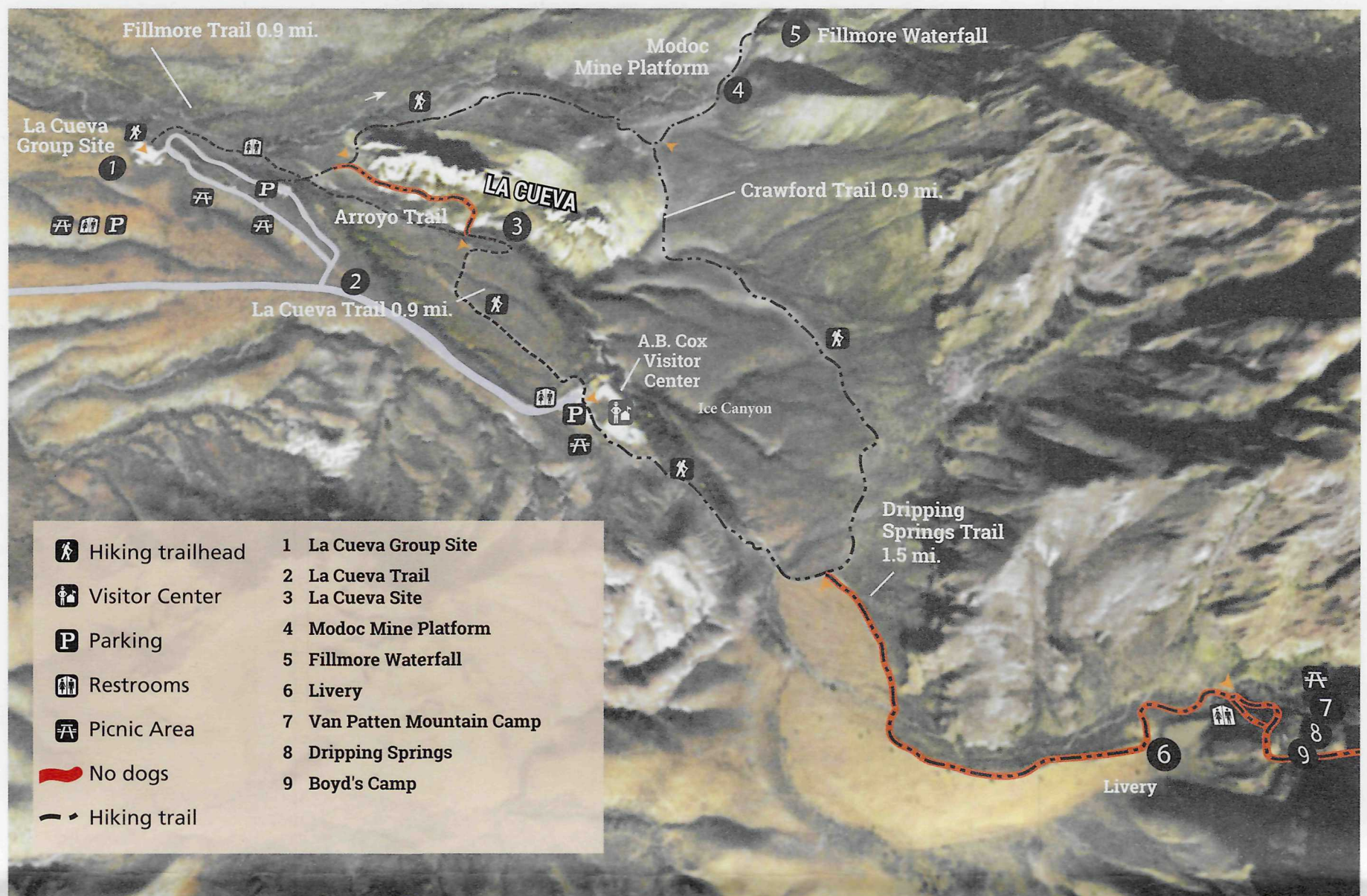
6. Respect wildlife:

Leave wildlife alone and watch it from a distance.

7. Be considerate of other visitors:

Make sure to give other visitors the chance for a natural, peaceful experience.

Dripping Springs Natural Area



Dripping Springs

The A.B. Cox Visitor Center located in the Dripping Springs Natural Area offers interpretive displays of the Organ Mountains. It is located ten miles east of Interstate 25, Exit 1, at Dripping Springs Natural Area.

Dripping Springs is home to several historic properties that are important to local and regional history, including La Cueva, Modoc Mine, Van Patten's Mountain Camp, Boyd's Camp, and the A.B. Cox Ranch.



Van Patten's Mountain Camp

There are over four miles of easy hiking trails in the Dripping Springs Natural Area, including the Dripping Springs Trail, which shows off desert scrub and low elevation piñon-juniper and oak woodlands.

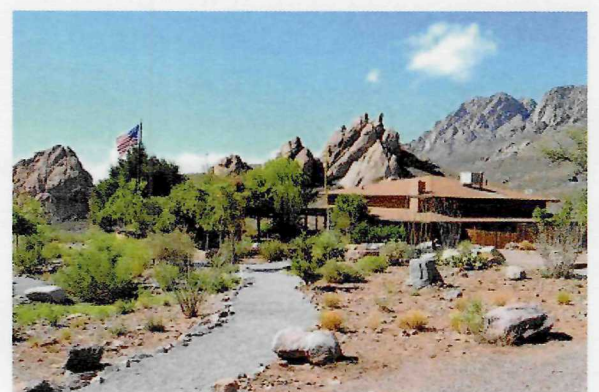
Watch for redtailed hawks, Gambel's quail, golden eagles, rock squirrels, desert cottontail, and mule deer. Common birds include the black-throated sparrow, ladder-backed woodpecker, verdin, black-tailed gnatcatcher, lesser nighthawk, Scott's oriole, and cactus wren. You can see Eastern collared lizards in the spring and summer.

The Dripping Springs Natural Area includes handicapped-accessible restrooms, 12 picnic sites, and one large family/group picnic site that can be reserved through the BLM Las Cruces District Office. There is no camping. Pets are allowed only on designated trails.

Donation boxes are available at the Visitor Center. 100% of all donations are used to benefit BLM programs and projects on your public lands.

Dripping Springs Natural Area Fees

Day use is \$5 per vehicle and \$15 per bus. The group site can be reserved for \$50. Fees are payable through cash or check only at the local office. America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Land Passes are accepted here.

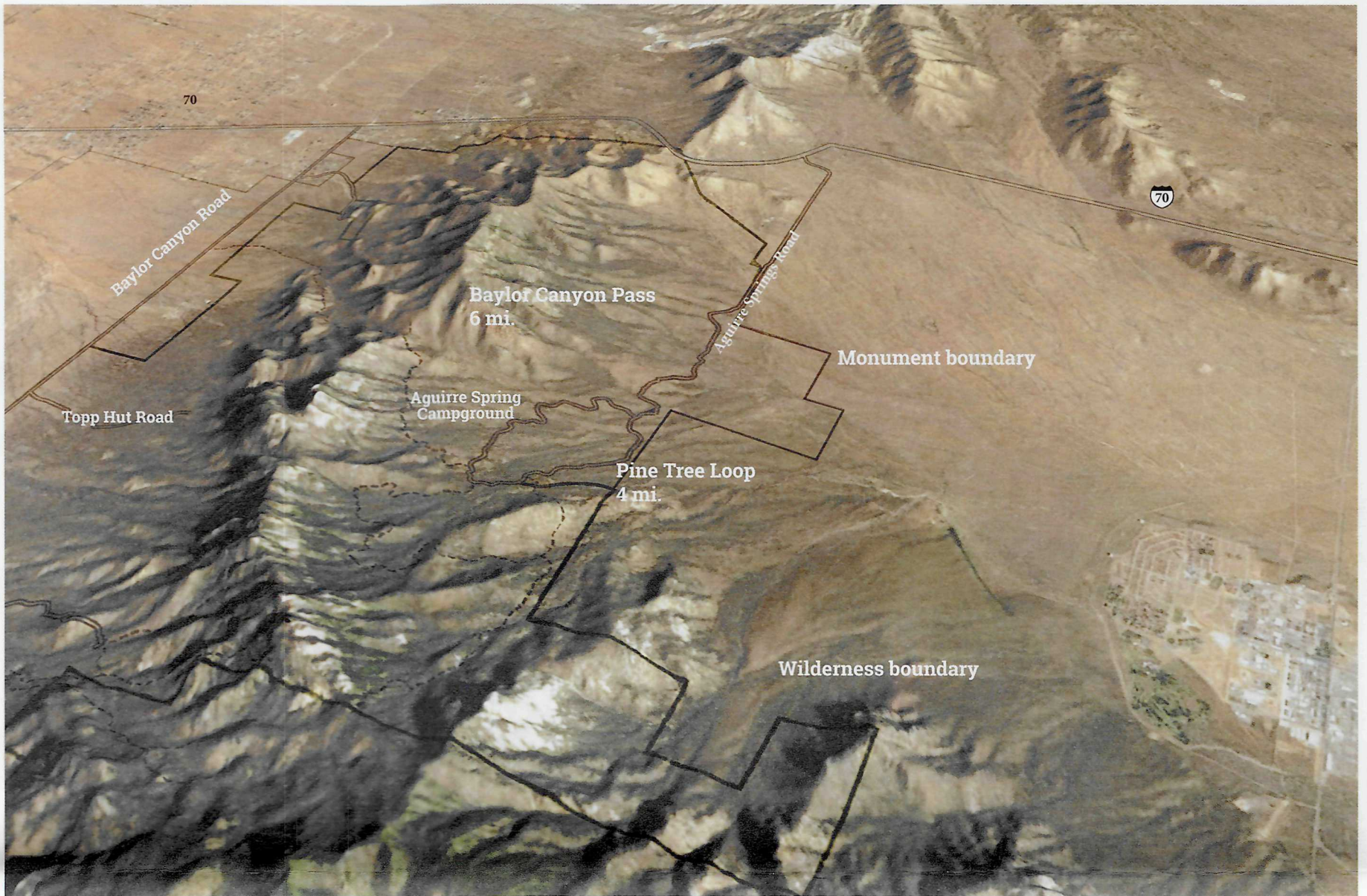


A.B. Cox Visitor Center

Dripping Springs Hours and Contact Information:

The gates to access Dripping Springs Natural Area are open in Summer (Mar-Nov): 7:00 a.m. - Sunset and in Winter (Nov-March): 8:00 a.m. - Sunset. The Visitor Center is open from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Dripping Springs Natural Area Visitor Center can be reached at (575) 522-1219. For additional information, visitors can also contact the Las Cruces District BLM office at 575-525-4300.

Aguirre Spring Recreation Area and Campground



Aguirre Spring

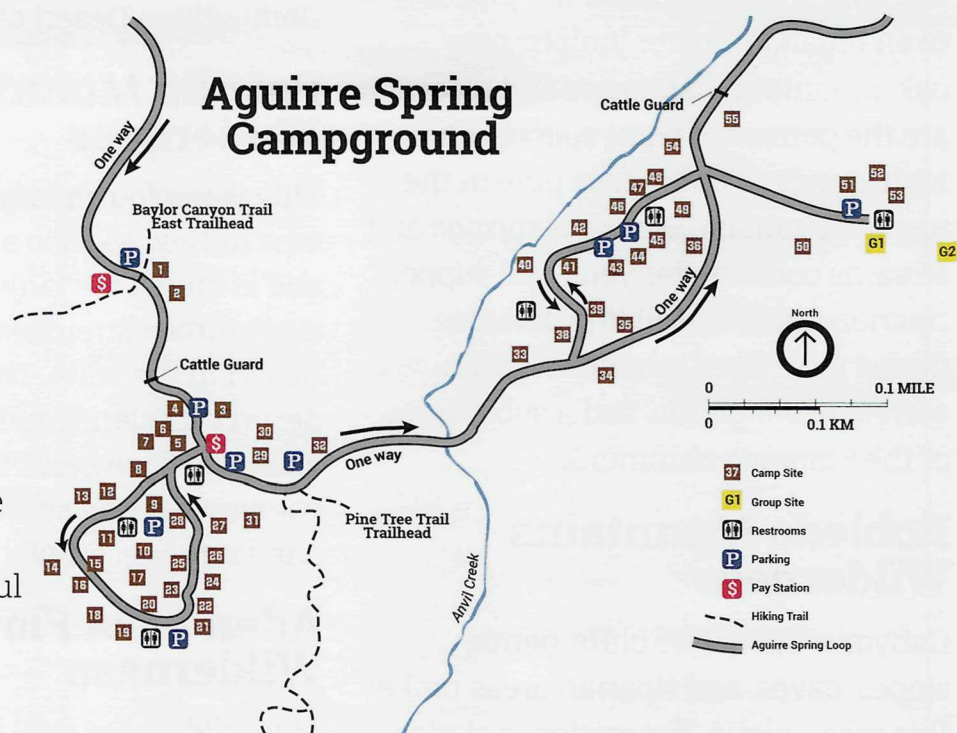
The high wall, needle-like spires of the Organ Mountains curve dramatically around a semicircle of Chihuahuan Desert habitat at Aguirre Spring Campground. The campground, nestled at the base of spectacular cliffs, overlooks the Tularosa Basin and White Sands National Park. Alligator juniper, gray oak, mountain mahogany, and sotol are a few of the abundant plant species here.

The campground offers dry campsites; however, there is potable water at the campground host site located four miles before the campground. The recommended max length for RVs is 23 feet. The road up to the campground becomes narrow and winding.

Hikers and climbers can enjoy challenging opportunities at Aguirre Spring. From the campground, trek the 4-mile Pine Tree Trail Loop through high altitude piñon-juniper woodlands with views of the Organ Needles and Tularosa Basin. On Baylor Pass, summit Baylor Peak from either the 2-mile Aguirre trailhead or the 4-mile Baylor Canyon Rd trailhead, or hike the entire six miles in one trip. Be mindful of harsh and dry heat on the trail with little shade; bring water, protective clothing, and wear sunscreen.

Aguirre Spring Recreation Area Fees

Aguirre Spring Campground is a recreation fee site. Day use is \$5 per vehicle and \$15 per bus. Overnight camping is \$7 per site. All sites have a shade shelter, picnic table, grill, and tent pad. Please pay at the self-pay stations through cash or check only. Group sites can be reserved for \$50 at the BLM Las Cruces District Office or call (575) 525-4300.



Aguirre Spring Gate Hours and Contact Information:

The gates to access Aguirre Spring Campground are open in the Summer (Mar- Nov) 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., and in the Winter (Nov - Mar) from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. For questions, call the BLM Las Cruces District Office at (575) 525-4300 or call the Aguirre Spring Campground Host at the site at (575) 644-9143. US Highway 70 between Aguirre Spring Campground and Las Cruces is sometimes closed for missile testing. For US Highway 70 closure information, call White Sands Missile Range at (575) 678-1178.

Wilderness Areas in the Monument

Wilderness is the highest level of protection for public lands in the United States to ensure that wild spaces remain for future generations. They are sources of clean water and air, clear night skies, and a biodiversity of animals and plant species. There may be trails or evidence of past human life, but the rest is dominated by the natural landscape and its processes.

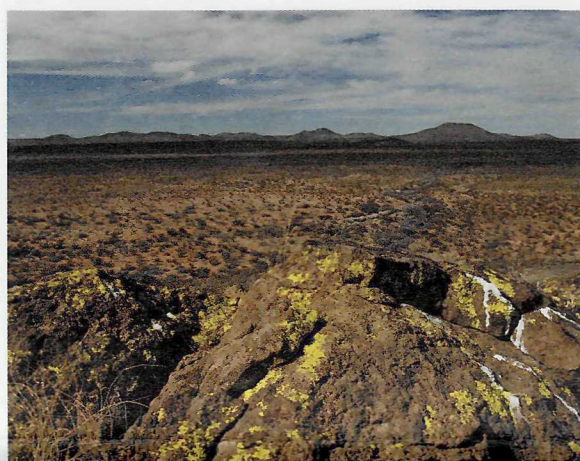
In 1964, nine million acres were designated as wilderness and today, there are over 100 million acres. With the passage of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument became a part of the wilderness legacy. Ten new wilderness areas were designated within the monument in 2019 totaling 241,554 acres. One of the wilderness areas,

Robledo Mountains Wilderness, is shared with Prehistoric Trackways National Monument.

Wilderness in southern New Mexico protects large tracts of the Chihuahuan Desert. There are extinct volcanoes, a large lava flow as evidenced by the basalt field covering the desert floor, as well as trace fossils. There are also cultural and historical sites such as ancient rock art sites, prehistoric villages, historic homesteads, and WWII bombing sites. These places represent the spirit of stewardship and the belief in the inherent value of the land.

Americans love wilderness for a diversity of reasons.

What does wilderness mean to you?



Organ Mountains Wilderness

The Organ Mountains Wilderness is located on the eastern edge of Las Cruces. The Organ Mountains range from 4,600 to over 9,000 feet, and are so named because of the steep, needle-like spires that resemble the pipes of an organ. Alligator juniper, gray oak, mountain mahogany and sotol are the dominant plant species here with stands of ponderosa pine in the upper elevations. Seasonal springs and streams occur in canyons and support riparian habitats. Wildlife includes desert mule deer, mountain lion, a variety of songbirds, and a subspecies of the Colorado chipmunk.

Robledo Mountains Wilderness

Canyons, limestone cliffs, gentle slopes, caves, and riparian areas make this area unique. Vegetation includes scattered junipers, diverse cacti, mesquite, creosote bush, and grassland.

Sierra de las Uvas Wilderness

The area is a mountain complex of tilted, bedded volcanic rock. The

western slopes are gentle, while cliffs dominate the east side. The landform is characterized by mesas, buttes, and canyons. The vegetation is primarily grasses and desert shrubs with juniper on north facing slopes at higher elevations. Rimrock along the mesas provides nesting sites for many raptors.

Broad Canyon Wilderness

The Broad Canyon Wilderness shelters hidden water pools, flat-topped mountains, and ancient cultural sites. Lava flows carved by the erosion of water form several small canyons whose sides are colored by lichens on the rock. The quiet in this area is broken by a flush of quail as you explore a landscape dominated by Chihuahuan Desert scrub.

Potrillo Mountains Wilderness

This is the fourth largest wilderness area in New Mexico at 105,085 acres and is one of the largest relatively undisturbed stretches of Chihuahuan Desert in the state. This area contains desert grasslands, extinct volcanoes, and black lava fields that provide water catchment from seasonal rains and habitat for desert plants and animals.

Aden Lava Flow Wilderness

This wilderness contains 27,673 acres of basalt lava flows, pressure ridges, lava tubes, volcanic craters, and sand dunes. Over 15,000 years ago, lava flowed from Aden Crater. Cracks in the lava allow habitat for grasses and shrubs to grow including many cacti and yucca species. These crevices also allow shelter and den sites for wildlife,

including species that have adapted to blend into the black lava.

Mt. Riley Wilderness

Three volcanic cinder cones make up the majority of this 8,382-acre wilderness. Mt. Riley, the highest point in the region at just shy of 6,000 ft., boasts views of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument as well as south into Mexico.

East Potrillo Mountains Wilderness

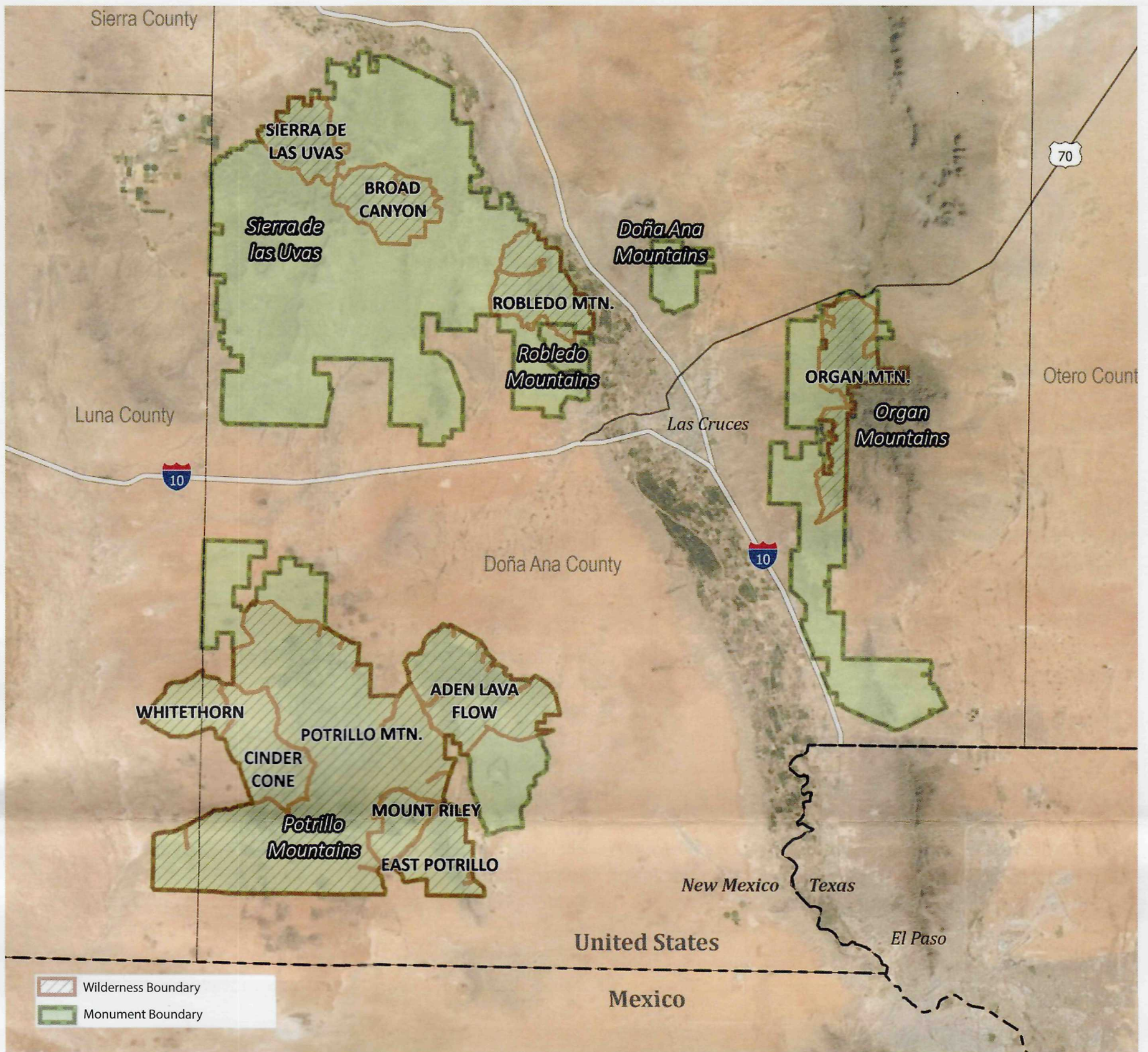
To the east of the Mt. Riley Wilderness, the 12,155-acre East Potrillo Mountain Wilderness' limestone and dolomite ridgeline provide shelters and caves for golden eagles and great horned owls. This area protects a diverse community of Chihuahuan Desert plants.

Whitethorn Wilderness

This 9,616-acre wilderness received its name for the abundance of whitethorn acacia bush found here. This native shrub is key year-round food source for quail and a summer food source for mule deer. The wilderness boasts views of the surrounding mountains ranges.

Cinder Cone Wilderness

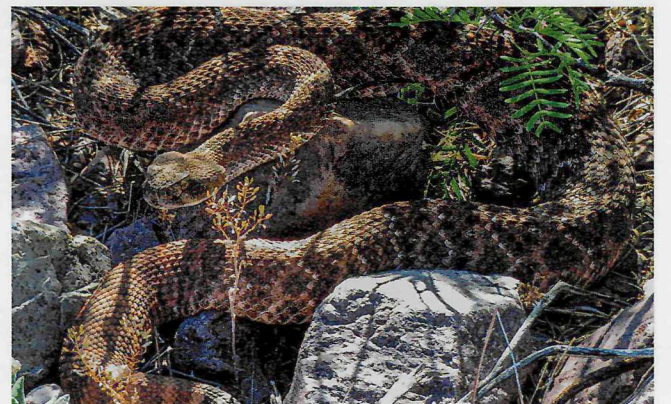
This wilderness area was designated for its extremely high concentration of volcanic cinder cones and evidence of the area's volcanic history. The cracks in the lava store water for plant and animal species, creating a rich ecosystem amongst the cinder cones. The 16,935 acres of this wilderness add to the protection of the greater Potrillo Mountains complex.



Watch Your Step!

Public lands and wilderness areas provide habitat for many native snake species. Snakes hide in dens to retreat from the heat, to hibernate, and to care for their young. Some snakes have live births and will protect their offspring from danger;

leaving their den in search of a meal or mate is a dangerous endeavor. They prefer to be left alone to bask in the sun or hide in the shady grass when it's warm. Eight out of 46 snake species found in New Mexico are venomous. A snake strikes when they feel threatened so give snakes a lot of space to avoid danger.



Recreate Responsibly

Enjoy wilderness areas in their natural, wild state but be mindful of your impact.

- No off-road motorized or mechanized equipment, including ATVs and bicycles, are allowed.
- Do not launch, land, or operate drones in wilderness.
- Do not make or use temporary roads.
- Commercial activity requires a permit with the BLM.
- Respect the history and present culture of the Organ Mountains. Leave artifacts (such as old cans, pottery sherds, arrowheads, etc.) where you found them and do not deface petroglyphs.
- Prepare for your backcountry trip. The U.S. Geological Survey can provide detailed topographic maps.
- Hunting is allowed in wilderness areas with the appropriate permits.

Geology in the Monument

The Organ Mountains have an explosive geologic history. During the Paleozoic Era, this area was a shallow tropical sea, home to numerous invertebrates whose fossils are still found today in the marine shales and limestones west of the Organ Needles and at Bishop Cap.

In the Eocene Epoch, approximately 36 million years ago (Mya), the Earth's crust in southern New Mexico began pulling apart to form the Rio Grande Rift. As the continent was stretched, the crust became thinner, allowing magma to seep out from the mantle into large chambers in the crust. The upward movement of this magma resulted in volcanism in the rift zone. The most intense rifting activity occurred between 25-10 Mya, but still continues today.

Organ Caldera

Most of the rocks that make up the Organ Mountains were formed by the Organ caldera volcano about 36 Mya. At that time, large volumes of silica-rich magma intruded into the upper crust at depths of about 4.3- 5.6 miles below Earth's surface. Magma erupted explosively three times from this volcano. The very large volumes

of erupted magma resulted in the collapse of the ground overlying the magma chamber, forming a circular volcanic depression known as the Organ caldera. The next oldest rocks – known as "Orejon Andesite" – are a series of dark, crystal-rich exposed lava flows approximately 43 million years old that are found in Fillmore Canyon. These are thought to be associated with volcanoes that predate the Organ Caldera.

Volcanic Eruptions

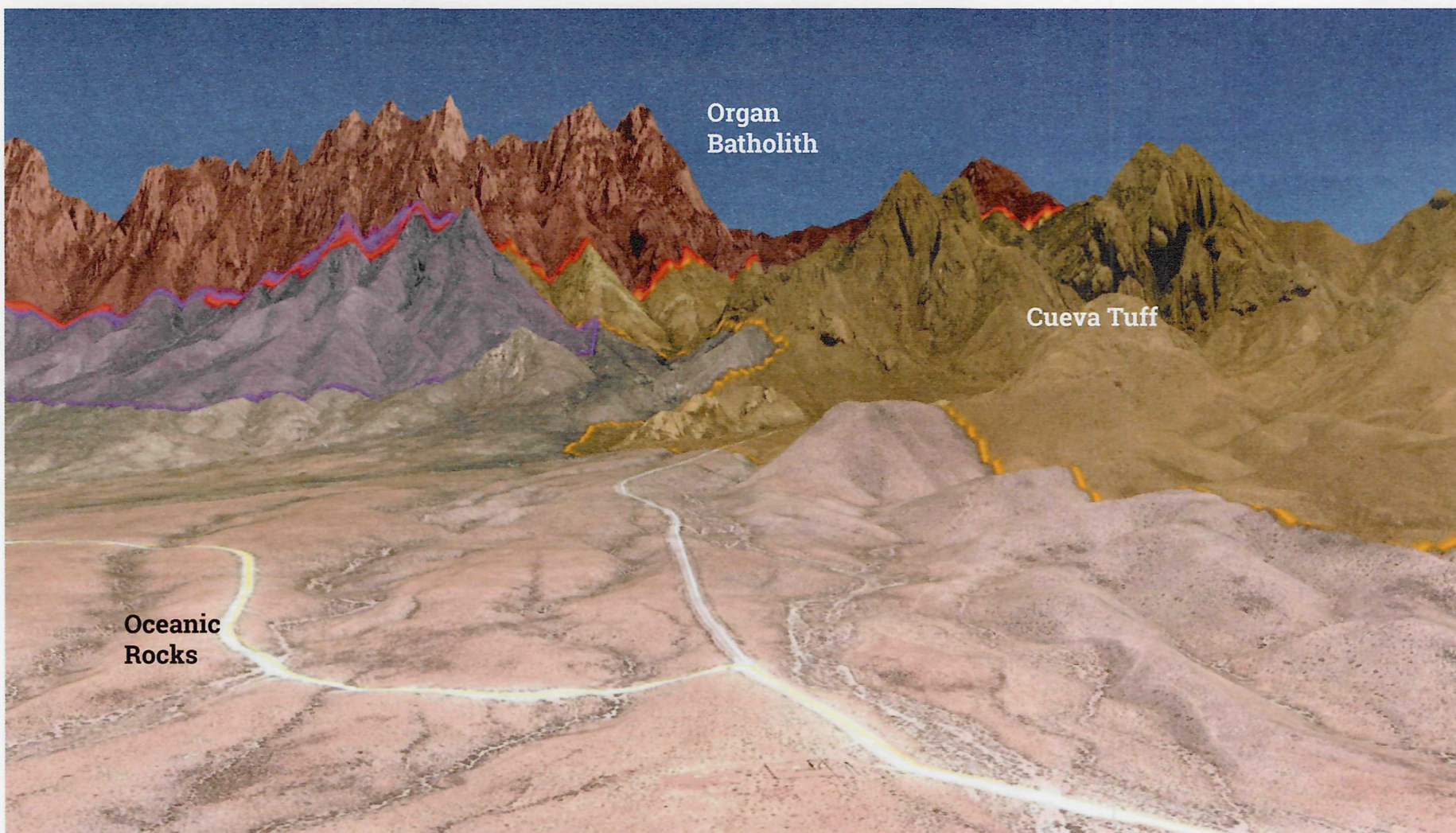
The first volcanic eruption that occurred approximately 36.5 Mya produced a light-reddish-colored tuff rock called rhyolite that formed from a fast-moving mixture of hot gases, ash, and rock particles. Now known as the Cueva Tuff, it can be seen in dramatic form at La Cueva, just west of the A. B. Cox Visitor Center at the Dripping Springs Natural Area and at Peña Blanca. Eruption of the Achenback Park Tuff and then the Squaw Mountain Tuff followed, respectively, 36.2 Mya and 36 Mya. The Squaw Mountain Tuff was the largest eruption and produced volcanic deposits. The thick, dark-purple rocks of this tuff are exposed at Dripping Springs. The last known eruptions from Organ Caldera occurred 36-35.7 Mya.

These eruptions formed the West Side Lavas, which are exposed in small hills on the west side of the Sierra Vista Trail between Soledad Canyon Road and Dripping Springs Road.

Organ Batholith

After the eruptions ceased, the magma still flowed below Earth's surface. This magma rose into areas of weakened crust, then cooled and crystallized, forming the Organ Batholith which is comprised of plutonic rock with large, interlocking crystals ("granite"). The Needles and Sugar Loaf on the east side of the mountains are just the tips of the Organ Batholith.

Approximately 18 Mya, in the Miocene Epoch, the crust in southern New Mexico began extending and faulting due to intensified expansion of the Rio Grande Rift. This caused tilting and uplift of the Organ caldera rocks. Because of this faulting, we have the unique opportunity to see both the cooled magma chamber (the plutonic rocks) exposed in the northern part of the Organ Mountains and the volcanic rocks in the south. Continued tilting and erosion of these rocks has given us the beautiful jagged peaks of the Organ Mountains that we see today.



During the volcanic eruptions that led to the formation of the Organ Caldera and subsequently the Organ Mountains, thousands of feet of ash were expelled into the air. This volcanic ash

eventually became rhyolite tuff. The magma that remained underground became the Organ Batholith that was uplifted and eroded about 10 million years ago. Lastly, oceanic rock is

the remnant of the much older late Paleozoic limestones that was deposited on the ocean floor and managed to survive the volcanic activity of the Organ Caldera.

Wildlife and Plant Exploration

Sky Islands

Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument is an area of high plant and animal diversity. This is due to the increased precipitation and lower temperatures that are common in higher elevations. The Organ Mountains rise 6,000 ft. above the floor of the Chihuahuan Desert below and are referred to as a "sky island." Sky islands are environments in which specialized conditions exist to support life that cannot be sustained in the harsher desert climate of lower elevations. Habitats in the Organ Mountains vary from Chihuahuan Desert shrubland to Juniper/Oak woodland to Ponderosa Pine ecosystems at the highest elevations.

Nowhere else on Earth

The Organ Mountains are known to have many "endemic" species— species that can only be found in a specific, geographic region, such as within the monument. Endemic species in the monument are found no place else on Earth. Isolation is often considered a pre-condition to endemic species evolving. The monument's sky island habitat provides this opportunity for isolation where species are separated from other habitats and where their distribution is limited. Many animals and plants have adapted to thrive, survive, and cohabitate on this sky island, such as the species listed on this page.

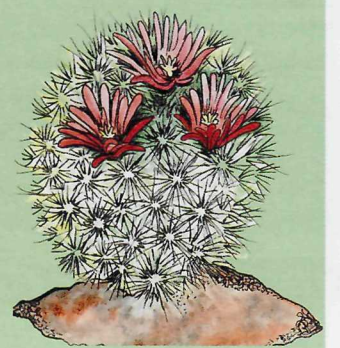
Organ Mountain Chipmunk (*Tamias quadrivittatus*)

These small mammals eat seeds, insects, and fungus which they store in burrows and rock crevices. Any time of year, it is a treat for hikers to spot this quick moving mountain dweller. Organ Mountain Chipmunks are the only chipmunk species that do not hibernate in the winter.



Pincushion cactus

This rare cactus thrives particularly in eroded broken mountain terrain in the Organ Mountains, far above the desert lowlands. All cacti have many adaptations for such an arid climate.



Organ Mountain Talussnail (*Sonorella orientis*)

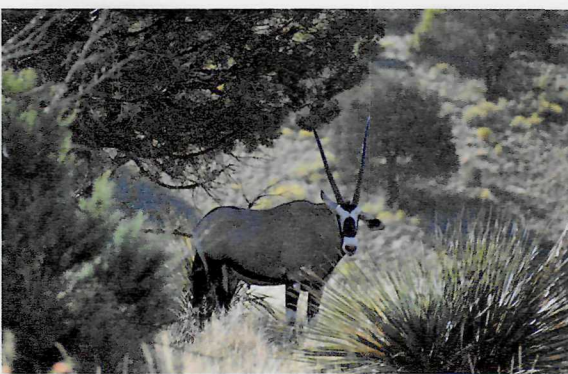
Tallusnails face large challenges. Their habitat includes wooded, northwest facing areas where moisture may exist. Their weathered white exoskeleton is sometimes the only evidence a hiker may observe.



Organ Mountain Evening Primrose (*Oenothera organensis*)



This bright yellow flower blooms at dusk as hikers are heading home. It grows in many of the canyons within the monument where water is available. The primrose's survival is dependent on night pollinators. The Sphinx moth dutifully carries pollen from flower to flower in return for nectar.



Oryx

You might encounter oryx while hiking in the Organ Mountains. These 500-lb antelopes were introduced by the New Mexico Game and Fish to provide big game opportunities for hunters. They were released in the White Sands Missile Range and have since expanded their range to the Organ Mountains. They are quite striking animals but there is concern as to how they impact the local ecosystem. Never approach or feed any kind of wildlife. Wild animals can be unpredictable. Leave wildlife alone and enjoy them from a distance.

Night Life in the Organ Mountains

When the sun sets, the desert comes alive. The lesser nighthawk, great horned owl, Merriam's kangaroo rat, mountain lion, javelina, and tarantula all emerge from their daytime shade to hunt and feed in the cool of the night. The ringtail, seen here, has excellent sight and hearing, which helps it navigate the nighttime. This relative to the raccoon has many identifying features, from its long, fluffy tail with alternating stripes to its large, rounded ears. The problem, however, may be seeing one to identify it! Elusive nocturnal critters and excellent climbers, the ringtail is a true creature of the night.

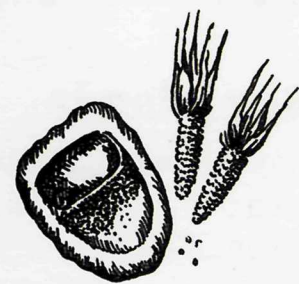


Confluences of Culture through Time



Bedrock mortars were used by Indigenous people to grind and pulverize many different kinds of plants for food and medicine.

The story of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is one that stretches back to the earliest beginnings of human history on this landscape. Since time immemorial, Indigenous people have called the lands of the monument home. From the earliest days, people practiced a nomadic lifestyle which involved moving across the landscape on a regular basis to acquire seasonally-available resources and foods.

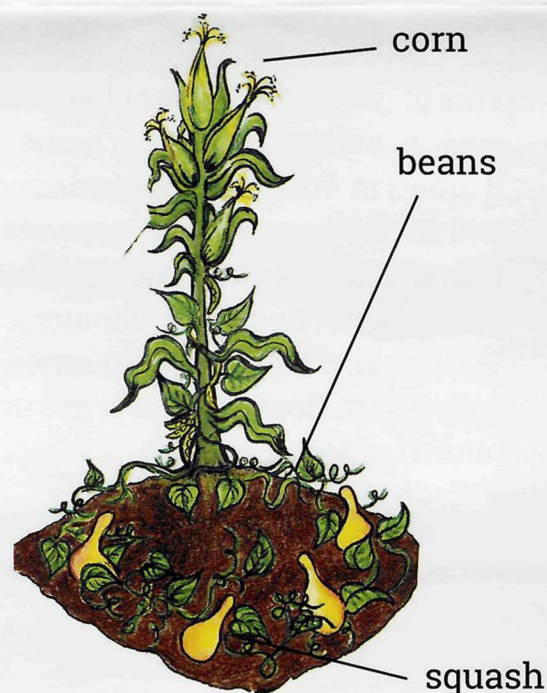


A Metate is a traditional grinding tool used to process a variety of natural resources including maize.

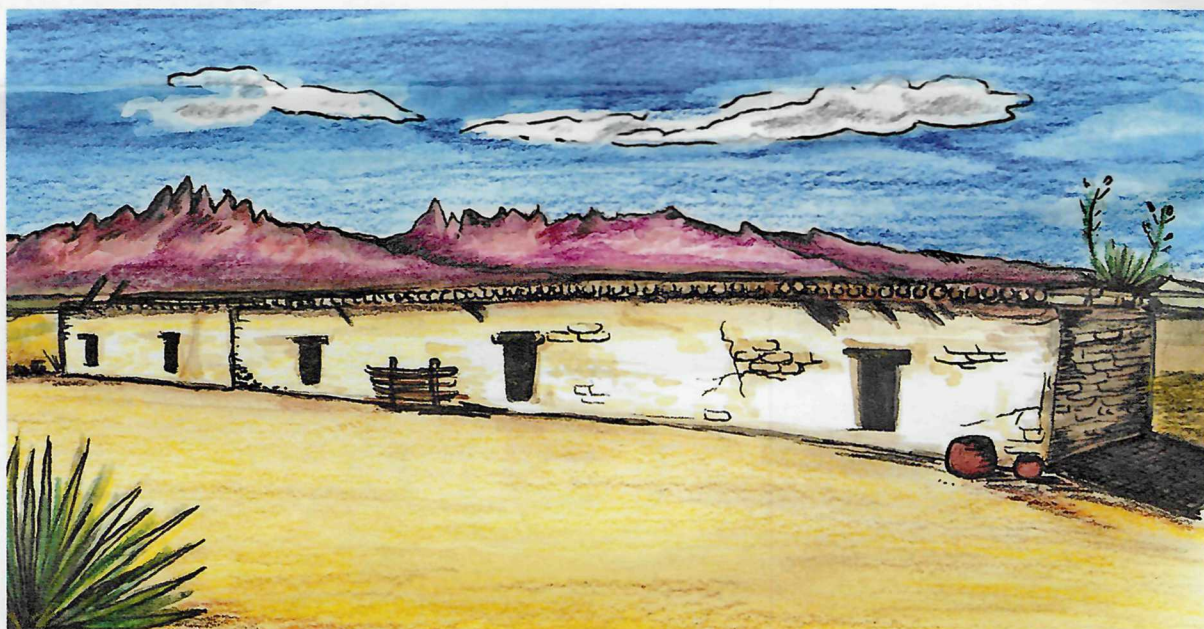
The diverse monument environment provided the necessary food, water, shelter, and resources that people needed to flourish in the Chihuahuan Desert. Game such as bighorn sheep and mule deer roamed the many canyons and foothills of the mountains. Plants such as agave and sotol could be harvested, roasted, and then prepared to create nutritious food. Rich geological deposits contained ideal material for making stone tools and grinding implements.

The Ancient Three Sisters

The domestication of beans, maize, squash and other crops brought many changes to people's patterns of life. Village life began as people became more sedentary in order to nurture and harvest their crops.



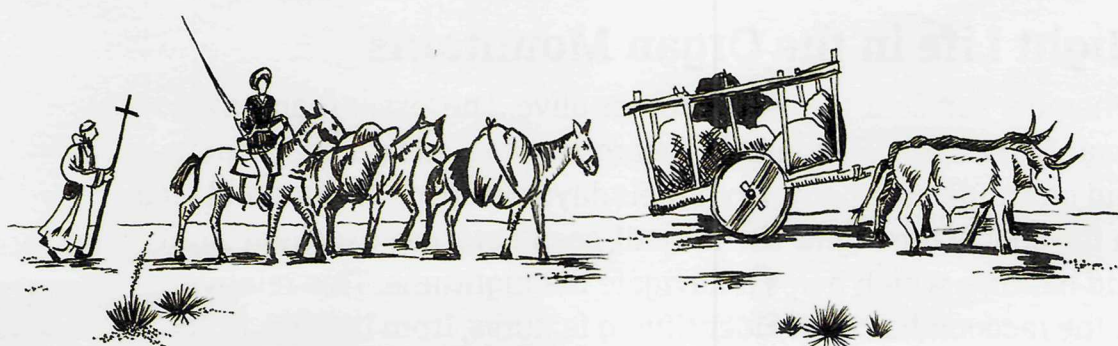
Small villages of pithouses, and later pueblos, sprang up in areas of the monument's landscape where farming was feasible. Drought-like conditions and other adverse environmental factors prompted people to eventually leave the pueblos to return once again to a more nomadic lifestyle.



Above is an artistic rendition of a late prehistoric Jornada Mogollon pueblo room block located in the Tularosa Basin of New Mexico. The Jornada Mogollon were a prehistoric archaeological culture that lived in southern New Mexico and West Texas between AD 200/400 and AD 1450 approximately. The Jornada lived in pueblo style villages similar to this one for approximately 250 years.

The first Europeans of the region in the 1500s largely bypassed the area on their march to establish settlements further north into New Mexico. The route the Spanish took through these lands ultimately became El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro.

It was not until 1659 that the founding of El Paso del Norte marked the beginnings of permanent Spanish settlement in the region. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 prompted numerous Spanish colonists from northern New Mexico, along with Piro and Tiwa speaking people, to resettle to El Paso, TX.



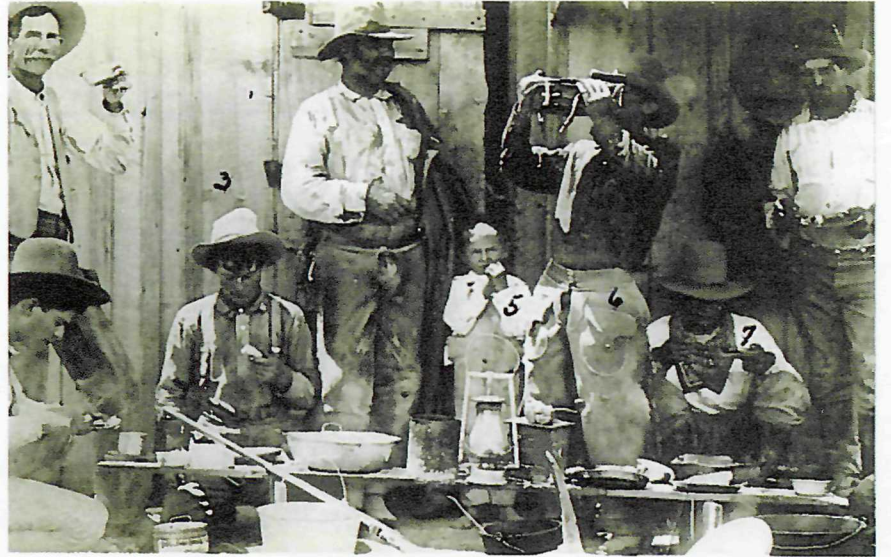


The Mexican-American War of 1846 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1854 ushered in a new era of American presence in the region. The encroaching American settlement into the traditional homelands of the Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache led to conflict between settlers and Indigenous peoples. For many years, Indigenous leaders such as Victorio (Bidu-ya/Beduiat) and Geronimo (Goyaałé) led their people in resistance to defend their homeland.



Lozen (late 1840s-1886) was a skillful warrior; a prophet, and an outstanding medicine woman. She was the sister to Chief Victorio. She was also known as a “shield to her people.” History has it that Lozen was able to use her powers in battle to learn the movements of the enemy and that she helped her people avoid capture.

After Victorio's death, Lozen continued to ride with Chief Nana and joined forces with Geronimo's band until she surrendered with the last band of Apaches in 1886. She died of an illness in Mount Vernon Barracks in Mobile, AL.



In time, as conflicts subsided, the lands of the monument would attract all types of people seeking to establish a new life in this scenic country. Ranchers established homesteads and raised their herds on the mountain landscapes where their livestock grazed and drank from the mountain springs.

Miners found their fortunes in the many mines that dot the slopes of the Organ Mountains. Farmers flocked to till the fertile soils of Mesilla and Hatch Valleys. Cattle rustlers and outlaws created hideouts in the mountain caves to avoid capture from the law. Health seekers flocked to the higher elevations of the Organ Mountains, seeking the altitude cure to alleviate their respiratory illnesses.

Whatever their motivations or background, individuals established thriving communities which endure to this day. It is for these reasons and for this history that the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument remains an important intersection of Native American, Hispanic American, and Anglo-American heritage.

The monument is home to many archaeological sites that provide physical evidence of the land's history and the history of its people. These sites are precious, irreplaceable places that allow us to learn from and connect to the past. From the prehistoric rock shelter of La Cueva to the historic ruins of Dripping Springs, all are examples of important cultural resources that the monument protects for the enjoyment of future generations.

Today, many people tend to view archaeological sites as static places that have been neglected or deserted for generations. Yet, many Indigenous communities continue to visit the archaeological sites where they pay homage to both the sacredness of these sites and to their ancestors.

When visiting archaeological sites, show respect for those who came before by treading softly and leaving the site as you found it.



Agave heart being prepared for roasting, courtesy of the Historic Preservation Office of Mescalero Apache.

Voices of the Land

The Bureau of Land Management wants to formally acknowledge that the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument has been and continues to be the traditional homeland for many Indigenous peoples.

In prehistoric times, the monument was home to three major cultural groups as defined by archaeologists; the Mimbres Mogollon, Jornada Mogollon, and the Casa Grandes peoples.

Today, Indigenous people including the Mescalero Apache Tribe, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, Comanche Indian Tribe, Hopi Tribe of Arizona, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, Isleta Pueblo, Tortugas Pueblo, Navajo Nation, Tesuque Pueblo, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Acoma Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, and others continue to maintain strong cultural and ancestral ties to the lands of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.



Eclipse, by Oliver Enjady, Mescalero Apache

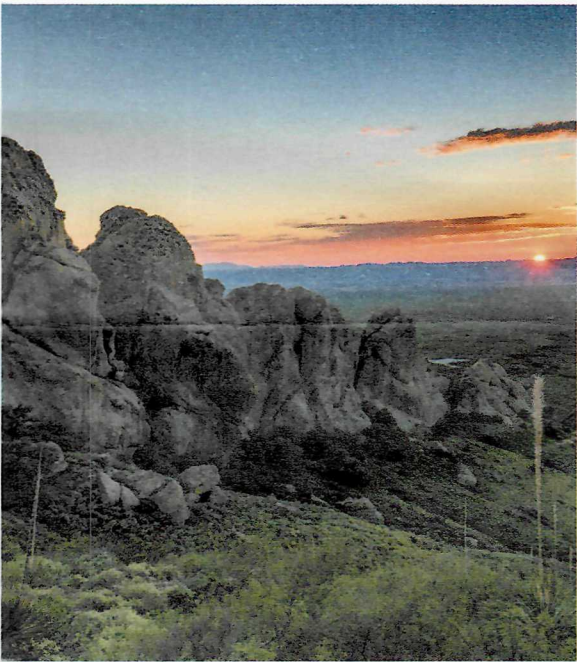


The physical landscape is directly connected to the Hopi culture and traditions as we practice today. It is astonishing that many pictographs are mirror images of what can be seen in the Hopi ceremonies today. Everything in nature is balanced, the water movement, the cliff wall, the position of the sun and a human to see this message. This was my first extraordinary experience at Dripping Springs.

—Ms. Marilyn Fredericks,
Bacavi Village Hopi Elder

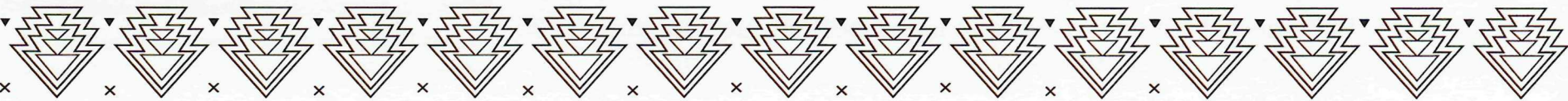
The Organ Mountains area is still an important place to the Apache people. These mountains served as a safe haven for us providing food, shelter, and water when resources were scarce. This area continues to be an important resource to gather traditional medicines and foods that are still used in our ceremonies today.

—Joe Padilla
Mescalero Apache Elder

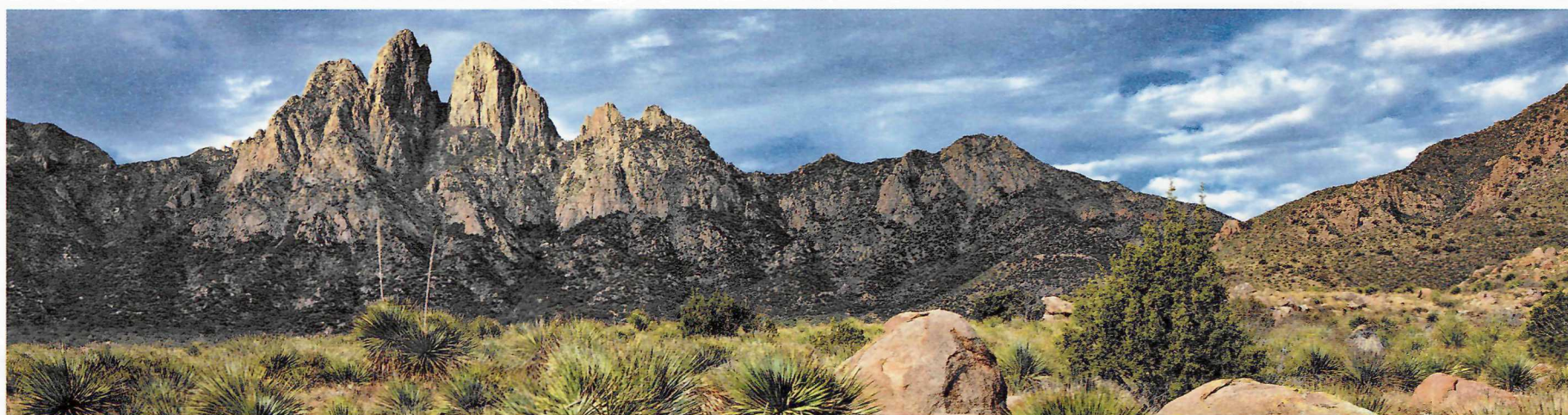


Our people relate to the symbols on many of the rock art that is located within the monument. These places are viewed as our grandfathers and so the people today continue to have a deep respect for area and the land by paying our respect with stories, in song, with prayer, and offerings. We as a people have a strong desire to protect these areas, to preserve them for future generations so that our people may continue to experience and learn about our history in this area and to strengthen our bond to the land. In doing so, this is how we keep our stories alive and is a way of sharing our history with others who come to visit these places.

—Mr. Rafael Gomez



Monumental Partnerships



We want to extend a thank you to our partners and groups that work with public lands.

Friends Group

The Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks was established in 2011 to help coordinate grassroot efforts around the designation of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. In the time since, they have coordinated numerous community events to celebrate the incredible bond our community has with the monument. These events have included clean-ups, guided hikes, star watching, and restoration projects.

They have recently launched their Moving Montañas program which

seeks to connect the youth in their community with opportunities to enjoy our amazing outdoor spaces. These include hikes, camping trips, and summer camps. They believe the best thing they can do now to protect our desert landscapes is to foster and build the next generation of stewards for our public lands. They have recently launched a docent program to help guide and educate visitors on the many sites to see on the monument.

Visit the Friends and learn more at organmountainsdesertpeaks.org.



Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance

Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance (SNMTA) is a leading voice and a resource for outdoor recreation in southern New Mexico and west Texas that seeks to connect communities and lands by preserving and enhancing recreation trails. Formed in 2014 by hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers, and recreation and land enthusiasts, SNMTA maintains, plans, builds, uses, and advocates for trails throughout the borderland region. Partnering with fellow preservation and recreation organizations, SNMTA acts as a central resource for all things trails, including events, maps and guides, fundraising, maintenance, and recreation and conservation policies. Their website features detailed descriptions and directions to eighteen distinct trails within Organ Mountains, from the Doña Anas to Aguirre Spring to the Potrillos. In 2015, SNMTA created the Monumental Trails program with the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and in 2017, began leading the Sierra Vista Trail Run as a community event and fundraiser. SNMTA aims to show the links between communities and their environment by encouraging self-powered travel, healthy and sustainable living, and the outdoors and quality of life. To learn more or get involved, visit snmta.org.



Internships

Considering a career in conservation? The BLM offers numerous opportunities for students and recent graduates to work on public lands through crew or intern positions. Interns with the BLM can develop skills in science, planning, or conservation and gain hands-on experience in public land management. Currently, the Organ Mountains host interns from Conservation Legacy and Conservation Corps New Mexico (CCNM), branches of AmeriCorps.

Founded in 1998, Conservation Legacy and CCNM facilitate programs that engage individuals, strengthen host communities, and transform lands through localized, on-the-ground conservation service. Interns work in diverse capacities that range from conservation service projects like trail building, mapping, or wilderness monitoring to longer-term individual placements with nonprofits or federal agencies working in planning, preservation, education, or restoration. Contact your local BLM office or find active openings and opportunities at conservationlegacy.org.

Explore More Public Lands



Prehistoric Trackways National Monument

Lat/Long: 32.37248028, -106.897435
575-525-4300

This 5,280-acre monument was established in 2009 to conserve, protect, and enhance the unique and nationally-important paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values of the Robledo Mountains in southern New Mexico. The monument includes fossilized vertebrate and invertebrate trackways, as well as many marine and plant fossils from the Permian Period.

Yost Draw

Lat/Long: 32.92888889, -107.00555556
(575) 525-4300

Take a walk in 1598 with those who traveled on the El Camino Real. This 1-mile trail leads to the historic Camino Real, de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail. Read interpretive signs along the way with stories about this part of the journey. The trail ends at the top of an escarpment—a steep, rocky slope that was a true test for caravans with huge freight wagons. This large, basalt outcropping is one of the landmarks encountered by travelers on the El Camino Real.



Three Rivers Petroglyph Site

455 3 Rivers Rd, Tularosa, NM 88352
(575) 585-3457

The basaltic ridge of Three Rivers contains over 21,000 petroglyphs, including masks, sunbursts, wildlife, handprints, and geometric designs made by the area's Indigenous people. This site represents one of the largest petroglyph areas ever recorded in the Southwest. A rugged half-mile trail takes visitors to see many of the most interesting petroglyphs at this site.

White Sands National Park

PO Box 1086
Holloman AFB, NM 88330
(575) 479-6124

Rising from the heart of the Tularosa Basin is one of the world's great natural wonders—the glistening white sands of New Mexico. Great wave-like dunes of gypsum sand have engulfed 275 square miles of desert, creating the world's largest gypsum dunefield.

Leasburg Dam State Park

12712 State Park Road, Radium Springs, NM 88054,
(575)-524-4068

A short 25 minute drive from bustling Las Cruces brings you to this quiet park along the Rio Grande. Leasburg Dam State Park offers peace and relaxation, a beautiful cactus garden, several hiking trails, and opportunities for fishing, canoeing, kayaking and birding. Night sky programs are very popular at this park, which features an observatory.

Hueco Tanks State Park

6900 Hueco Tanks Road No. 1 El Paso, TX 79938
(915) 857-1135

For thousands of years, people have trekked to these rock hills in far west Texas. In earlier times, they came for the rainwater pooled in natural rock basins, or huecos ("whey-coes"). Visitors today marvel at the imagery left by these ancient people. At Hueco Tanks, you can hike, rock climb, bird watch, study nature and history, picnic, and stargaze. Visitors can take guided and self-guided tours to view rock imagery.

Franklin Mountains State Park

Headquarters: Tom Mays Unit 2900 Tom Mays Access Rd.
El Paso, TX 79911 (915) 444-9100

The Franklin Mountains provided most of the basic necessities of life for early people here. Today, the mountains meet a different human need – our need for time in nature. Explore these high-desert mountains, just 15 minutes from El Paso, TX. Franklin Mountains State Park offers great hiking, biking and rock climbing. Visit for the day or camp overnight. Look for geocaches, bird (and nature) watch, or picnic.



PUBLIC LANDS
INTERPRETIVE
ASSOCIATION

This publication was developed as a cooperative project between the Bureau of Land Management and Public Lands Interpretive Association, a nonprofit organization that inspires and educates the public about the natural and cultural heritage resources of America's public lands.