

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Buffalo National River  
Arkansas



# Foundation Statement for Buffalo National River

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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*Buffalo National River Foundation Statement*, contact:  
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## Purpose



*The purpose of Buffalo National River is to preserve, conserve, and interpret a clear, clean, free-flowing river and its Ozark mountain setting of deep valleys, towering bluffs, wilderness, and pastoral landscapes.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why the park's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park system designation. These statements are directly related to the park's purpose, are substantiated by data or consensus, and reflect the most current scientific or scholarly inquiry and cultural perceptions, which may have changed since the park's establishment.

**A Free-Flowing River.** Buffalo River is an exceptional example of a free-flowing Ozark mountain river. Undammed, undiminished by the hand of man, it is the only river protected for its entire length within the Ozark Plateau. As a dynamic river ecosystem, Buffalo River is important for scientific discoveries and advances in ecosystem management and restoration.

**Karst Geology.** Buffalo National River contains a dense array of karst features, including over 360 caves and thousands of sinkholes, sinking streams, springs, and other natural features related to karst processes. In several places the entire river runs underground for over a mile. Outstanding examples of faulting, landslides, ore mineralization, and world renowned fossil deposits have formed during its long geologic history.

**Ozark Cultural Landscape.** The entire park is an outstanding cultural landscape which embraces the overall story of Ozarks settlement and history from the first prehistoric inhabitants to today's living rural community of Boxley Valley, providing opportunities to study and interpret cultural, environmental, technological, and social adaptations.

**A Complex Ecosystem.** The convergence of northern and southern ecosystems, the joining of western and eastern species, a rich blend of botanical communities and abundance of fire-adapted habitats, creates an ecosystem recognized locally, nationally, and globally as unique.

**Exceptional Recreation Setting.** Buffalo National River's spectacular waterfalls, limestone bluffs, clear water, wooded canyons, and wilderness provide an exceptional setting for recreational opportunities unequalled in this part of the country.

# Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those that warrant primary consideration during planning and management because they are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values may include features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, etc. If the fundamental resources and values are degraded, the purpose of the park and its significance are jeopardized.

The fundamental resources and values of Buffalo National River are

- **Physical and Biological Processes.** The river has sculpted a dynamic physical environment characterized by a diversity of channels meandering through narrow alluvial bottomlands, quiet pools separated by short riffles, and swift running rapids that cut deeply through bedrock and rearrange natural features such as gravel bars and islands.
- **Aquatic and Riparian Habitat.** The free-flowing river and its associated biological communities and natural features offer exceptional opportunities for scientific discoveries and advances in aquatic and riparian ecosystem management and restoration.
- **Fitton Cave.** Arkansas' longest cave, Fitton Cave, has impressive displays of gypsum flowers and needles of uncommon size and beauty, angel hair, and pendants, as well as cascading flowstone waterfalls, and other calcite crystalline formations.
- **Cave Environments.** Cave environments provide habitat for unusual organisms with specialized adaptations, such as extreme longevity and enhanced sensory perceptions.
- **Scientific Study.** Karst features provide living laboratories for a wide range of scientific studies including global climate change, ecological restoration, hydrology, and conservation biology.
- **Historic Resources.** The architectural and engineering legacy of buildings, structures, landscapes, objects, roads and trails provides the visitor with a physical connection to Ozark history and a laboratory for research topics such as pioneer homesteads, Civil War events, mining, industry, and recreation.

- **Archeological Resources.** Among the over 700 recorded prehistoric and historic archeological sites, two bluffshelters, Cob Cave and the Indian Rockhouse, have provided pivotal information that contributes to the understanding of prehistoric life.
- **Ethnographic Resources.** Continuation of farming in Boxley and other agricultural areas perpetuates traditional activities and land use. Oral histories document events, traditions, and lifeways of Buffalo River settlers.
- **Wildlife Habitat.** There are exceptional wildlife populations within diverse native communities that include various types of forests, woodlands, wetlands, savannas, and globally significant glade complexes.
- **Plants.** There are more than 700 native plants, including the endemic and culturally significant Ozark chinquapin tree, Ashe's juniper and a substantial array of native flowers.
- **Recreational Opportunities.** Every year, over a million visitors explore, enjoy, and appreciate the scenic beauty, historic characteristics, and wilderness setting of the Buffalo National River.
- **Wilderness Experience.** The three wilderness areas within Buffalo National River provide visitors the opportunity to experience solitude, mental and physical challenge, and spiritual enrichment.



