



# Foundation Document Overview

## Dinosaur National Monument

Utah / Colorado



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## Purpose



*DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT protects, studies, and provides access to extraordinary fossil deposits of dinosaurs and other life, a record of thousands of years of human occupation and use, and the wild and ecologically diverse landscape shaped by the Green and Yampa Rivers.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Dinosaur National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The world famous Carnegie Quarry provides a remarkable window onto the Late Jurassic world of dinosaurs. There the National Park Service pioneered the *in situ* (in place) preservation of fossils, with 1,500 dinosaur bones available for viewing, touching, and study. This approach has served as a model for many other fossil sites around the world.
- Dinosaur National Monument displays the most complete geological record of any national park unit. The 23 rock formations and their fossils reveal vast environmental and biological changes over 1.1 billion years of Earth history, spanning the Pre-Cambrian to Cenozoic eras. Powerful geologic forces have uplifted, eroded, and exposed these layers in spectacular faults, folds, and canyons that continue to inspire new questions for general visitors as well as for professional geologists and paleontologists.
- The exceptionally diverse communities of plants and animals within Dinosaur National Monument result from its geographic location at the hub of five major biophysical regions, as well as the strikingly large number of geologic substrates and varied topography, ranging from river bottoms to montane peaks.
- Over 90% of Dinosaur National Monument retains substantial wilderness character, which provides opportunities for visitors to experience solitude, natural sounds, dark night skies, wilderness whitewater recreation, wildlife viewing, and inspirational scenic vistas.
- Dinosaur National Monument contains the lower 46 miles of the Yampa River, which is the last remaining large, free-flowing river in the entire Colorado River system. The Yampa's natural snowmelt-driven flow provides a unique whitewater rafting experience and important habitat for native and endangered Colorado River Basin fish.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

- The confluence of the Yampa and Green Rivers within Dinosaur National Monument provides outstanding opportunities to observe and study a wild river (Yampa), a flow-regulated river (Green above confluence), and a hybrid river (Green below the confluence) within the context of the Colorado River Basin. Comparing the three river reaches informs management for long-term river ecosystem health and function in the face of climate change and human population growth.
- The proposal to dam the Green River below Echo Park in the 1950s galvanized the nation's fledgling conservation organizations into a potent political power that defended the national park idea. The resolution of this controversy empowered the conservation movement and set the stage for the Wilderness Act and establishment of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Explorer John Wesley Powell set the stage for whitewater boating on the wild rivers within Dinosaur National Monument—a unique, high-quality, nonmotorized boating experience. Many historic innovations in whitewater craft design and technique were developed specifically to run the Yampa and Green Rivers in what is today Dinosaur National Monument.
- Dinosaur National Monument is unique in preserving and protecting a complete chronology of the prehistoric Fremont Indian culture, providing excellent opportunities for research and education. This record includes over 400 documented sites, such as seasonal gathering sites, hunting sites, villages, rock art, and other associated artifacts.



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Paleontological Resources/Fossils and the Fossil Record**
- **Carnegie Quarry**
- **Geological Resources**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Scenic Vistas**
- **Wilderness Character**
- **Biologically Diverse Landscapes**
- **Yampa and Green River System**
- **Scientific Study**
- **Museum Collections and Archives**

Dinosaur National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Recreational Resources—Rivers**
- **Recreational Resources—Nonboating Backcountry Recreation**





# Description

The essence of Dinosaur National Monument involves the conservation of a biologically diverse landscape of desert, mountains, and two river canyons, with an abundance of ancient fossils and past environments preserved in rock. This exemplary collection of resources is reflected by two distinct moments in its history: the initial establishment of an 80-acre monument in 1915 to protect the “*extraordinary deposit of Dinosaurian and other gigantic reptilian remains*,” and the 200,000-acre expansion in 1938 to protect the surrounding scenic canyons of the Yampa and Green Rivers for many miles upstream and downstream of their confluence.

The geologic and paleontological resources in the monument showcase a great diversity of geologic landforms, 23 exposed geologic strata that developed over 1.1 billion years, and the associated plant and animal life, most notably a world-renowned fossil record. Carnegie Fossil Quarry, the marquee site at the monument, includes over 1,500 paleontological resources and has shared fossils with museums around the world. The monument also protects an exceptional living biological diversity that stems from its location at the transition zone of multiple physiographic provinces, including the Wyoming Basin, Great Basin, central Rocky Mountains, and Colorado Plateau. This location, combined with local topography that spans high desert areas to riparian river valleys, provides a unique blend of natural conditions that support over 1,000 plant and animal species.

Over 10,000 years of human heritage is also represented, including resources such as petroglyphs, pictographs, a variety of artifacts related to the prehistoric Fremont culture, and the ongoing importance of these lands to Shoshone and Ute cultures. The monument also has a diverse collection of histories and artifacts from European and early American settlement and exploration, including Spanish exploration, homesteading, ranching, and John Wesley Powell’s history of traversing the monument’s rivers.

Dinosaur National Monument also provides a wealth of experiential opportunities for visitors that range from active recreation in wild backcountry or on wild rivers, to hands-on educational experiences at the many scientific exhibits or cultural sites. Given its remote location, it also offers extensive visitor opportunities for solitude, discovery, and appreciation of unspoiled landscapes, skies, and waterways.

