

PARTNERSHIP
MAGAZINE

2025 | Volume 2

The Land
CAN'T WAIT



RESILIENCE IN ACTION:

A Letter from Joe Neuhoj, BEP Executive Director

I often take breaks in my day to consider the pictures hanging around my office, years of photos representing the arc of my career. These images aren't just of vistas or humans, they're intermixed with small and easily overlooked aspects of the landscape – a blooming Datura, a herd of Pronghorn, the rusty patterns on a sandstone wall.

Decades ago when I first visited this region, I longed for connection, symbolically claiming something ineffable as I raced to visit every nook and cranny. A great deal has changed for me over the past four years of this journey with Bears Ears Partnership (BEP). I've come to deeply appreciate, as well as aspire to, the humility and respect that these sacred lands deserve. Because Bears Ears is more than the sum of its parts, I find myself constantly challenged by the dual concepts of service and leadership in a world that is rapidly changing, along with its politics. Service through leadership – or leadership through service – means promoting reconciliation and healing. As we move through 2025, I invite you to join me in logging fewer miles, putting away lists, and spending more time listening to the land so we are engaging in a way that strengthens resiliency among ourselves and our communities.

Part of our vision at Bears Ears Partnership is to be a resource for efforts that respect and heal this place.

We work with a diverse group of interests to empower education, conservation, and Tribal partnerships. Our ideal is to learn from all our partners, while becoming teachers along the way. Needless to say, this year will witness significant political fluctuations, but our work remains steadfast. We strongly support co-management of this region, empowering Tribal communities to have a voice on the health and management of ancestral lands. We also support Bears Ears National Monument, and will support long-term, sensible, and collaborative protections across the region.

With Canyon Country Youth Corps now under our leadership, and in addition to our growing team and expanding programs, **we envision a 2025 in which the impact of our work benefits the entire Four Corners region.** This work includes providing job training for Indigenous youth engaged in conservation work on the land, building nationally recognized education programs in the schools and on the landscape, expanding our footprint and facilities for learning about cultural landscapes and living biomes, and finally, augmenting economic development in rural communities through regional services and good paying jobs.

None of this is possible without you. So, as you enjoy our annual magazine highlighting the people, programs and places of BEP's work, please consider supporting us in whatever way you can.

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Joe Pachak's SOLSTICE EFFIGIES

Since 2011, Bluff artist Joe Pachak has been creating animal effigies to be burned as part of an **annual winter solstice celebration held in Bluff**. Over several months, Pachak and a team of volunteers arrange these sculptures – often reaching **20 feet tall** – by hand, using wood gathered from the region, rebar and metal wire. Each year is different: Effigies have included cow elk, mammoth, Pleistocene bison, Great Blue Heron, bears, coyote, ravens, and an abstract sculpture representing water, sand, and rock of the desert. This massive, collective art project becomes a meaningful way to bring community together on the longest night of the year. Hundreds of people from near and far join this unique event to share ceremony, prayer, dance, and enjoy speakers, communal meals, and the **transformative power of fire and light**.

Photo credit: Sarah Burak

Check out our interview
with Joe Pachak about the
importance of community
in his artistic practice
on our website.





A Bright Future for BLUFF'S DARK SKIES

By Sarah Burak, BEP Education Director

Bluff is dark. It's very dark. The surrounding landscape is even darker. The Milky Way, that beautiful arch of dust and gas sweeping across the sky, is readily visible most nights. Planets, comets, and meteors are easily seen with the naked eye. When camping we joke that we'll say goodnight after we see a shooting star – and then go immediately to bed because shooting stars are so frequent.

Over the last several years, **I have had the pleasure to work with the Town of Bluff on becoming an International Dark Sky Community.** Gaining this designation is not a simple task. There are a multitude of hurdles to overcome and areas of consensus to gain. But as we're rapidly losing natural darkness worldwide, it was important to do what we could to protect this resource at home and set an example for other gateway communities to public lands. **This designation isn't about being dark, it's about preserving the dark.** To become a Dark Sky Community, you must demonstrate the desire and ability to protect natural darkness.

Preserving Stars is Preserving Lifeways

This dark sky designation is a natural step for Bluff, given that we are surrounded by designated Dark Sky Parks, including Goosenecks State Park, Hovenweep National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument, and recently designated Dark Sky communities such as Moab and Castle Valley. **Enjoying and learning from the dark sky is already a major aspect of Bluff's quality of life.** Since 2016, an annual star party has been held in Bluff during the winter months, with dark sky conservation talks, Indigenous star stories, constellation tours, and telescope viewing. What began with Bluff Elementary School programming for students and parents has expanded into two community events each year. These events are a collaboration between local partners including Bears Ears Partnership (BEP), Canyon Country Discovery Center, Utah State Parks, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, local schools, and volunteers. We are also planning our first-ever Dark Sky Festival to be held in late November 2025, which will expand our efforts in community education by sharing the wonder of the night sky and promoting reverence and respect.

Preserving the dark sky is a crucial aspect of many of BEP's and our partners' values and priorities, from protecting cultural practices requiring darkness to boosting sustainable astrotourism, as well as limiting impacts on nocturnal wildlife, such as bats, owls, and desert foxes. By minimizing light pollution, we are helping to preserve these species and maintain the delicate balance of our local ecosystems. Bluff's designation would also align with the Bears Ears National Monument co-management model outlined in the preferred Alternative E, which would seek a Dark Sky designation for the Monument, preserving the "earth-to-sky" epistemology of the Coalition Tribes. For example, traditional stories emphasize the significance of the night sky in Diné culture. The Navajo word for constellations is "So' Dine'e," which translates to "Star People."

Photo credit: Paul Martini

“Every Native nation has used the stars for guidance and looked to them to remember stories that were taught and given to them by their elders,” says Wanda Ketchum, a Diné elder and teacher at Bluff Elementary, who has presented star stories. “Stars guide us to look and know when seasons will change, planting seasons, and appropriate ceremonies to be performed.”

Lighting the Way Towards Progress

The Dark Sky Association has very explicit requirements for limiting light pollution, such as having fully shielded fixtures and limiting the number of lumens on a property. With incorporation, the Town of Bluff was able to establish its own Planning and Zoning commission to create ordinances needed for the designation. After many public meetings, hearings, and education presentations, we finally passed a lighting ordinance in December 2019. Following a 2022 amendment to better align with the Dark Sky Association guidelines, we established a Dark Sky Committee to begin the application process.

“Our dark skies are our collective legacy. Preserving them is honoring them, and it’s the least we can do as the collective beneficiaries of all the majesty we witness,” says Malysa Egge, a founding member of Bluff’s Planning and Zoning Commission.

Beyond enacting regulations to ensure dark sky preservation, communities must demonstrate a commitment to the ordinance.

This includes residents and businesses coming into compliance by replacing lighting fixtures or reducing exterior lighting. Communities are also required to monitor and record sky-glow data and provide educational programming about the importance of dark skies. Since 2022, volunteers have been taking baseline readings in and around Bluff and recording this information in a database.

In 2024, a formal partnership between Town of Bluff and Bears Ears Partnership was solidified, helping to push us over the finish line. BEP has agreed to take on educational efforts, providing at least two programs yearly, and sky monitoring on a seasonal basis. This ensures that these requirements are met and can continue to be met in the future.

With the help of many community members and leaders, Bluff’s Dark Sky Community application was submitted for consideration in December 2024. Now we wait, but anticipate celebrating our designation – and the bright future for Bluff’s dark skies – in 2025.



“In the beginning when the constellations were being sent into Father Sky, a ceremony was performed for the stars. They each were told where to place themselves and what their contribution would be throughout time. The night would hold the stars for all human brothers and sisters, four-legged brothers and sisters, winged brothers and sisters, and the insect brothers and sisters. Because they were the ones who helped **set the stars with their faith and prayers that accompanied the sacred songs,** the medicine men sang when the stars were sent to their places in Father Sky.

– Wanda Ketchum, Diné elder



◀ **Project Archaeology Teacher Workshop**

In June, teachers from across the country participated in a workshop **hosted at the Bears Ears Education Center (BEEC) to learn how to teach Project Archaeology curriculum.** The three-day training included field trips to key archaeological sites and a cultural presentation by a local Indigenous elder. Teachers gained an understanding of Visit With Respect Guidelines, and were challenged to engage students in cultural and sacred landscapes.

Field Trips ▶

In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and Utah State Parks, we facilitated **13 field trips for 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students** during the spring and fall, where students learned about the fossil record and other ecology of the Bears Ears National Monument.



Learn, Grow, Engage: **2024 EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**



◀ **Summer Camps**

With our partner Ancient Wayves, we hosted two 3-day youth rafting trips along the San Juan River for ages 12-17. These camps, which are free for local youth, offer a fun and meaningful opportunity to connect with the Bears Ears landscape through rafting, hiking, and sharing Indigenous knowledge. We want to thank Louis Williams and his crew, as well as the Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant, for making these amazing trips possible.

Exhibits

We made tremendous progress on **our newest BEEC exhibit, "Tribal Connections,"** which will highlight the accomplishments and connections of the five Tribes and Pueblos of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition connections to the Monument. Since summer 2023, we have held workshops and meetings in partnership with Indigenous leaders and representatives to ensure that the information being shared is appropriate and meaningful. While we continue to work on this exhibit, we are sharing a temporary exhibit featuring the Cedar Mesa Perishables Project, which displays cultural belongings from the area that are held in museums across the country.

The Biocrust Project

In September, the BEEC had the honor of hosting a screening and discussion of The Biocrust Project, a **multidisciplinary art project combining science and art to explore the significance of the earth's "living skin."** The event featured Kristen Redd, Program Manager at the Nature Conservancy's Dugout Ranch Canyonlands Research Center, and multidisciplinary artist Jorge Rojas who helped create the project. The Biocrust film will be playing at the BEEC during regular business hours – stop by next time you're visiting!



Bridging Archaeological & Traditional Knowledge **TO PROTECT THE “LANDS BETWEEN”**

By Carleton Bowekaty, BEP Policy Director

In October 2024, Bears Ears Partnership and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) hosted the **4th Annual Tribal Gathering near the heart of the “Lands Between”** (TLB) at the Canyon Country Discovery Center in Monticello, Utah. Connecting with our partners and with the landscape, this gathering strengthened our ongoing campaign to protect the “Lands Between,” a temporary name for an area that holds immense cultural significance, encompassing the traditional lands of the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, Ute, Diné (Navajo), Paiute, and other Indigenous peoples.

At this past TLB Gathering, archaeological research partners highlighted research findings from LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) that **strongly suggests that TLB was a nexus of activity during the height of the Ancestral Puebloan era**. Archaeologists Winston Hurst and Fred Nials joined our Tribal partners from Hopi, Zuni, Navajo Nation, and others from Utah Diné Bikéyah, Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, National Park Service and Conservation Lands Foundation in sharing this information.

LiDAR imaging helped to identify berm-and-swale phenomena, or what the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has termed “Berm-Swale Field Systems.” Raised berms of dirt, mostly oriented east-west, are paired with intervening, shallow swales where the sediment from the swales is likely scraped, possibly designed to somehow capture and maximize water retention. This data supports preconceived notions of how Ancestral Puebloan populations relied on intensive labor and

spiritual practices. In addition to these agricultural fields, LiDAR data revealed previously unknown community centers with intersecting roads across TLB and the Great Sage Plain region. Our Tribal partners have expressed their support for further interpretation of this information from their respective traditional knowledge holders.

One of our goals for these Tribal visits is to not only share this information, but also seek interpretation of these features. Visits to the Five-Acre Pueblo and Ten-Acre Pueblo sites along Alkali Ridge served as nexus points for understanding extensive farming communities spread across the ridge. Lively discussions and interactions occurred between individuals sharing observations and interpretations as we continued onto Coal Bed Village and other sites and areas of cultural interest in Montezuma Canyon.

The following day focused on exploring solutions and next steps for the campaign. Nada Wolff Carver, Deputy Director for BLM, presented on Areas of Critical Environmental Concern designations and other avenues for protection of this landscape. BEP and our partners wrapped up the visit with reflection and dialogue on next steps, which include additional supporting resolutions or letters from Tribal partners. BEP and NPCA were glad to support the Hopi Tribe and the All Pueblo Council of Governors in effectuating supporting resolutions. **We look forward to gaining additional support for the “Lands Between” and the recognition of this unique landscape!**

Breaking Ground: THE UPPER SAND ISLAND PETROGLYPH PANEL

Bears Ears Partnership (BEP), with support from World Monuments Fund, alongside Tribal, agency, and non-governmental organizations, successfully completed our multi-year project to preserve cultural resources and enhance visitor experience at the Upper Sand Island Petroglyph Panel. This extensive project aimed to improve cultural site conservation, interpretation, recreation accessibility, and education to protect this sacred site for generations to come.

This rock panel is one of the oldest in North America, featuring centuries of rock imagery spanning from the 19th century to 2,500+ years ago. There are thousands of images along the walls, often overlapping each other. Most of the petroglyphs are from the early Basketmaker through Pueblo III eras. More recent Ute Mountain Ute and Navajo rock imagery can be identified by their brighter carvings and location lower on the wall. Iconic imagery includes Kokopelli and a bighorn sheep playing a flute.

The Upper Sand Island Petroglyph Panel is the **only site in Bears Ears National Monument designed specifically to meet ADA standards, and hopefully the first of many.** Visitors can now take advantage of a paved, six-foot wide trail that offers a viewing area of the panel, and four interpretive areas, including kiosks and signage with braille. There are two trail heads with ample parking space, making it easier to lessen the impact of visitation on this sacred site.

Interpretation at the site has been updated to reflect the site's fragile and sacred significance, and remind visitors of Visit With Respect guidelines. Input from all five of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition Tribes was essential for the design of the entire project. Representatives of the Pueblo of Zuni, Hopi, and Ute Mountain

Ute Tribes conducted ethnographic site visits.

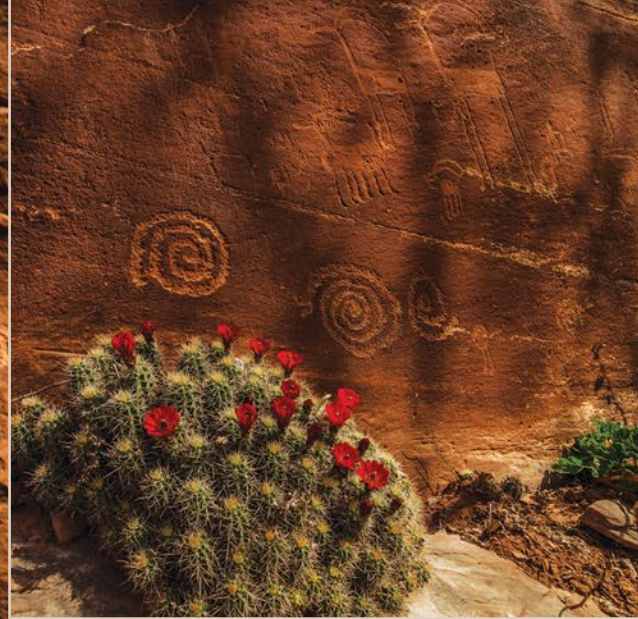
Crews broke ground in the fall of 2024, clearing the limited existing infrastructure in the parking area and

vegetation from the trail, minimizing natural damage. In early December 2024, an Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps crew cut and laid the D-loop foot trail that follows the San Juan River bank. BEP will continue to coordinate with the Bureau of Land Management and World Monuments Fund to finalize interpretive signage, which will be completed before the spring of 2025.



Watch a video to get a behind-the-scenes look at the Upper Sand Island Petroglyph Panel project





“The Bluff River Trail and the recently completed accessible section are a wonderful example of **the power of partnerships**. The completion of the accessible section of the Bluff River Trail would not have been possible without the support of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Commission, Bears Ears Partnership, Bluff River Trail Committee, World Monuments Fund, the State of Utah, Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation, Eccles Foundation, David Kelby Johnson Memorial Foundation, private individuals, and many more partners. **This section of trail will help improve access for Indigenous elders and those of all abilities.**

– Rachel Wootton, Assistant Field Manager for Recreation,
Bureau of Land Management – Monticello



Trail photo credit: Marley Haws

A New Chapter for CONSERVATION

For more than a decade, Bears Ears Partnership (BEP) has led field work and site preservation projects on the greater Bears Ears landscape, in partnership with federal agencies and other partners. This past year marked a **significant milestone for Bears Ears Partnership's Conservation Program: taking over leadership of the Canyon Country Youth Corps (CCYC), and renaming our Field Program to Conservation Program.**

While the name change reflects the maturity and growth of our organization, our central goal remains the same: our Conservation efforts reimagine **cultural preservation as an opportunity to reconnect Indigenous communities to cultural sites** within the Bears Ears region, enriching living connections to the land while mitigating potential impacts as Bears Ears faces increasing visitation.

Since its founding in 2000, CCYC's programming has continued to make a significant meaningful impact on the health and resilience of the Four Corners ecosystem, as well as on lives of young people. The conservation corps model provides invaluable opportunities for youth to **complete service projects while gaining hands-on training for skills they can apply to future careers in land management or conservation.**





Crews have many successful outcomes to report, such as their work on the Dolores, San Juan, and Escalante Rivers, increasing the number of acres of sustainable, healthy riparian communities, and decreasing those dominated by invasive, non-native plant species – to name a couple of examples. CCYC has also built strong, collaborative partnerships with a wide range of agency and nonprofit partners, including the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and RiversEdge West.

“Youth corps are really good at working together,” explains Janet Ross, founder of Canyon Country Discovery Center, which used to oversee CCYC. “So if one Youth Corps gets a big grant to do a pile of work, and they don’t have enough crews to do the work, they’ll partner with another corps.”

CCYC primarily hires young adults from the Four Corners region – mostly in San Juan County, Utah, a diverse county with a large Indigenous population. “CCYC in particular was interested in local recruiting, on the [Navajo] reservation and from local high schools,” explains Ross. “Our crew member makeup was typically about 50% Indigenous kids, and the rest were from all over the country, and that stayed pretty consistent.” CCYC has developed trust with Tribal Chapter houses and Indigenous families in the region; many crew members have signed up at the recommendation of family members who had previously served in the program.

BEP plans to expand CCYC’s Indigenous crew membership and work with Tribes and Tribal partners in support of collaborative co-management, especially in Bears Ears National Monument, but also other public Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management lands in southeastern Utah. The Conservation Program is gearing up for a busy season, with two trail crews, each with two leaders and six members, doing 80-hour hitches in the summer and fall.

The time spent in the field on a CCYC crew provides members with an immersive wilderness experience, offering an opportunity to connect with the landscape they are conserving. While many of the members in this region live within some of the most stunning public land in the country, their ability to access and experience them can be hampered by many barriers, including distance, transportation, and financial limitations. Particularly for Indigenous crew members, by spending time in the field, **members are able to develop a deeper, lifelong connection with their ancestral landscape.**

Many of these Indigenous crew members have gone on to be crew leaders and full-time staff with CCYC, and then on to find positions with the land management agencies BEP works with, at both the federal and state levels. Crew members will leave with important certifications, such as for chainsaw safety, CPR, wilderness first aid, and herbicide application, that prepare them for successful careers. Throughout the field season, crew members also have the **opportunity to attend workshops focused on writing skills, and job and college scholarship applications.** While aimed at navigating public lands management jobs, the skills they learn can help them craft application materials for any position to which they aspire.

“ I’m excited that BEP is continuing this program. **There will be more young people whose lives are changed, and they will grow and have more opportunities.**

– Janet Ross, founder, Canyon Country Discovery Center

BEP Conservation Director Britt Hornsby is eager to take on this new project. “It’s really exciting to get to work with the only youth corps based in the Bears Ears region,” he says. “Getting them back up and running, a legacy Corps with 20 years of experience, is going to be huge for conservation efforts across Bears Ears.”

Photo credit: CCYC/CCDC Staff

LASTING IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP:

The Bears Ears Conservation Partnership



By Charissa Mijessepe-Wilson, Co-Director, Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition

As Niishnabe (*Indigenous* in Potawatomi) and a caretaker for Earth, my title as a “conservationist” extends far beyond my occupation. It encompasses every aspect of my life – but especially that around relationships and the way we conduct ourselves with each other. **What we understand as caretakers is that how we treat each other mirrors how we treat land and our non-human relatives** (so-called “resources”). And as present day circumstances reveal, we’re not terribly kind to one another, and we definitely haven’t been kind to Earth. Despite this reality, I haven’t lost hope. In fact, as counterintuitive as it may seem, I have more hope now because uncertainty, peril, and despair are often paired with opportunity, change, and a desire to do something different. Times like these call to us to come together and invite us to really invest into relationships with each other, conduct ourselves “in a good way,” and start earnestly digging into authentic community building. Because my people understood that community carries us on even when all else seemingly fails. It might be hard to conceive what

community building looks like in this context, so I’d like to share an example of community building in my role as Co-Director of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition (BEITC), an Indigenous-led not-for-profit serving the five Coalition Tribes to preserve the Bears Ears cultural landscape.

The Bears Ears Conservation Partnership (BECPP) is not just another committee – it’s a **dynamic, community-driven initiative dedicated to fostering meaningful, on-the-ground restoration and long-term stewardship through deep collaboration and shared commitment**. A collaboration among Tribes, federal/state agencies, NGOs, like Bears Ears Partnership, and local communities, joined together to heal and caretake for the living watersheds across the Bears Ears landscape and the San Juan River corridor. Formed in 2024, this public-private partnership will prioritize Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) alongside multiple uses, western science, comprehensive planning, strategic fundraising, and sustained capacity to implement this vision over the long-term.

A Vision for Lasting Impact Through Partnership

At its core, BECP is built on the belief that collaboration, framed in the larger context of community building, is the key to meaningful conservation. It seeks to **unite voices from various backgrounds, perspectives, and knowledge, to ensure a comprehensive approach in shaping the future of the Bears Ears National Monument.** The partnership's evolving vision includes: strengthening cross-agency collaboration to create a holistic watershed restoration plan, developing shared knowledge resources that preserve institutional memory and support long-term success, and expanding membership to ensure a diverse range of expertise and perspectives. It's this emphasis on community and collective power building that makes the BECP in alignment with the values of the BEITC, and the reason we're invested into the BECP's success.

Defining Success Together

For BECP, **success is not just measured in conservation outcomes but also in the strength of the partnerships built along the way.** As stated above, community compels us forward and ensures our longevity, and therefore improves the longevity and health of the landscape. Much like the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, BECP seeks to demonstrate a collective commitment to long-term collaboration, whether formal or informal; tangible conservation impacts that reflect the values and efforts of the community; and a culture of inclusivity and adaptability, ensuring that all voices contribute to addressing current and future challenges.

Action Through Community Engagement

At the heart of BECP's mission is the recognition that conservation is a community-driven effort. The partnership **prioritizes projects that balance ecological health with cultural preservation**, with key objectives including ensuring that conservation efforts, like watershed restoration and species management, incorporate the knowledge and perspectives of Tribal communities; fostering open dialogue to build consensus and sustainable action plans; protecting sacred spaces while managing visitor impact and land stewardship; and encouraging knowledge exchange, particularly with Native youth, to deepen cultural connections to the land.

The BEITC is adamant about creating reciprocal relationships with community, meaning it wants to give as much as it takes, if not more. The BECP is a step towards these reciprocal frameworks that work to prop up community and not deflate them.

A Future Built on Collective Commitment

The path forward is about more than conservation – it's about fostering lasting relationships, ensuring that every initiative is rooted in shared values, and embracing the diverse perspectives that make Bears Ears such a vital and sacred place. Through collective knowledge, mutual respect, and a commitment to action, **BECP is not just protecting the land – it is building a legacy of connection, healing, and community-driven stewardship.**

Photo credit: Liberty Kinsel





LOOKING AHEAD at 2025

Pecos Conference Returns to San Juan County

Bears Ears Partnership has stepped forward to organize and host the **2025 Pecos Conference, August 7-10**, here in San Juan County! This annual conference, named for its first iteration in 1927 at Pecos Pueblo, New Mexico, is an **opportunity for student, professional, and avocational archaeologists to share the latest updates on archaeology** in the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. BEP plans to highlight the cultural heritage of Bears Ears National Monument and the “Lands Between,” with an additional focus on the importance of deep Tribal engagement and public lands co-management.

“Pecos is the oldest and longest-running archaeological conference in North America. BEP is pleased to be bringing the conference back to San Juan County, Utah, where it was last held in 2014,” says BEP Preservation Archaeologist Kenny Wintch. The Pecos Conference relies heavily on volunteer support. **If you're interested in either helping out or sponsoring the 2025 conference, please contact Kenny at Kenny@BearsEarsPartnership.org.**

Seeding the Future

Did you know that the Bureau of Land Management purchases around **20 million dollars worth of seeds every year** to support wildfire rehabilitation and restoration?

Dr. Jacqueline Grant from Grand Staircase Escalante Partners (gsenm.org) has been collecting seeds in southern Utah since 2017. She will be collaborating with Bears Ears Partnership to **revive the native plant seed collecting program** that previously existed in the Canyon Country Discovery Center.

Native plants are incredibly important to the environment and cultural heritage of southern Utah. To be the most effective, the seeds need to be sourced from local populations. This means that southern Utah needs a source of native plant seeds at the ready.

Native plant seeds are more variable than typical agricultural crop seeds, which means that collectors need some technical training before they can gather the seeds.

A portion of the seeds collected during this project will be conserved in a seed bank, and some of the seeds will be made available to the Indigenous communities in and around southern Utah. The rest will be used for restoration and research. The project is **part of the national Seeds of Success program**, and funded by the Colorado Plateau Native Plant Program.

Stay tuned for more updates about our packed event schedule!

We will be offering a wide variety of engaging programs, including Dark Sky Week, youth summer camps, stewardship days, Visit With Respect Ambassador trainings, visiting speakers, and more.

To get the latest updates, make sure you're following us on social media and subscribed to our e-mail newsletter. See back cover for more details.



Photo credit:
Jacqueline Grant



Preserving THROUGH FILM

With a grant from Temper of the Times to develop an educational conservation project, Bears Ears Partnership collaborated with Indigenous filmmakers and knowledge holders to create a short *Visit With Respect* documentary. Read this reflection from Emmy award-winning director Sahar Khadjenoury about “Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future,” which was released in March 2024.

by Sahar Khadjenoury, Filmmaker & Storyteller

Producing “Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future” as part of the Visit With Respect project was a deeply personal journey, rooted in both my passion for storytelling and my connection to the land. Growing up near Bears Ears National Monument, a place of immense cultural significance to the Navajo Nation and other Indigenous communities, I’ve always felt the weight of its history and beauty. The landscape is not only physically in my backyard but is also part of my identity. My own Navajo heritage, particularly through a shared kinship with revered leaders like Manuelito and Barbancito, made this project profoundly meaningful.

While collaborating and drafting the storyboard, drawing on the 20 guidelines for traveling to public lands, I was reminded of our shared responsibility to respect the environment and the sacred spaces that hold so much history. **This film isn’t only about preserving nature, it’s about honoring the people, cultures, and stories that have existed on these lands long before us.** The message of protecting our environment from misuse, damage, and destruction has always been at the heart of my work.

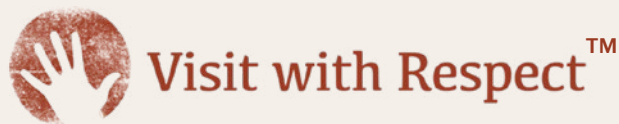
Filmmaking has always been a tool for social change, a platform to amplify voices that need to be heard. I began my journey as a filmmaker at 16, creating a public service announcement that spoke to the heart of community issues. Since then, Indigenous digital storytelling has become my guiding force. It has shaped my career as a television and film producer, and through it, I continue to advocate for a world where respect, heritage, and environmental stewardship are heard and prioritized. This film is my contribution to that ongoing dialogue.



Watch
“Preserving the Past,
Protecting the Future”
on our website



Learn more about
Sahar’s path
to filmmaking



In response to the increase in visitation over the past decade, we developed the **Visit With Respect (VWR) campaign** and these guidelines to encourage responsible visitation. As visitors to the greater Bears Ears region, **it is our responsibility to protect the cultural and natural resources you see in this magazine.**

This is both out of respect for the region's Tribes and Pueblos, and for all visitors who come next. We've incorporated our 20th guideline, *Remember That Ancestral Landscapes Are Sacred*, to remind the public that this living landscape is more than the outdoors – it's a space for healing, sustainability, and tradition.

Our trained Ambassadors educate the public about our 20 guidelines

at the most visited and sensitive sites across Bears Ears – and anyone can get involved. To join the Ambassador program, **scan the QR code** or visit

BearsEarsPartnership.org/get-involved/ambassadors



Remember That Ancestral Landscapes Are Sacred



Dogs & Archaeology Don't Mix



Historic Artifacts Aren't Trash



GPS Reveals Too Much



Stay on Established Trails



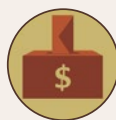
Leave Cultural Belongings Where They Are



Use Rubber-Tipped Poles



Leave Fossils & Bones Undisturbed



Pay Your Fees



Pack Out Your Poop



Don't Touch Rock Imagery or Make Your Own



Stay on Designated Roads



Avoid Building Cairns



Enjoy Cultural Sites Without Ropes



Steer Clear of Ancestral Structures



Camp & Eat Away From Archaeology



Guide Children Through Sites



Use a Fire Pan



View Sites From a Distance



Refrain From Grinding Ancestral Slicks

Photo credit: Jeremy Youst

Donate today to support BEP!
BearsEarsPartnership.org/donate-now



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