



**Bears Ears**  
PARTNERSHIP

**2022 IN REVIEW**

## DEAR PARTNERS,

Looking back on 2022, we embraced growth and change as an organization, led by the power of partnership across the communities we are fortunate to work with.

**Our evolution from Friends of Cedar Mesa to becoming the Bears Ears Partnership (BEP) honors the past, acknowledges how far we've come, and commits to partnership leading us forward** as we grow our most important programs such as Cultural Site Conservation, Education, Advocacy, and Visit with Respect.

**Your support helped make many noteworthy accomplishments possible this past year:** we worked to put Tribal interests front-and-center, partnering with Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps on numerous cultural site conservation projects while supporting the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and Tribal leaders in advocating for a monument management plan that prioritizes Traditional Indigenous Knowledge. We emerged from the pandemic and hosted the first Celebrate Cedar Mesa

in two years, featuring panel discussions and presentations that included Tribal leaders and representatives from across the Southwest. We continued to be a leader in education as we worked on-the-ground with land managers and our Ambassadors to increase awareness and promote Visit with Respect. We partnered with our incredible volunteers to make the Bears Ears Education Center a go-to-place for education programs and information about the monument. *And so much more...*

**None of this work would be possible without our partners (including you)** — as we turn the page to 2023, it is the strength, resiliency, and power of those partnerships that will continue to lead us forward. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm as we continue into this next chapter.

**With gratitude,**  
**Joe Neuhof,**  
**Executive Director**





## THE COLLABORATIVE FUTURE OF BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

2022 began the long-awaited planning process for **Bears Ears National Monument**, where we are already seeing historic steps toward collaborative management of the Monument by Tribes and federal agencies. One major step in this collaborative planning process was the release of the **Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition's draft Land Management Plan (LMP)**, a synthesis of Tribal perspectives on how the Monument should be managed for generations to come. Developed by Indigenous leaders from each of the five Tribes represented by the Coalition, the LMP prioritizes Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and recognizes the landscape as a holistic and interconnected system.

The release of the Coalition's LMP arrived on the heels of the historic cooperative agreement between Tribes and federal agencies, ensuring that Coalition Tribes will have leadership in the day-to-day management of Bears Ears National Monument, and that Traditional Indigenous Knowledge will guide joint decision-making for the Monument.

These milestones represent not only progress towards the co-management of Bears Ears — a fundamental component of the Monument's original designation — they also set a precedent for Tribal collaboration in the management of public lands moving forward.

As the planning process proceeds in 2023, our priority will continue to be supporting Tribal leadership at each step and ensuring our community is informed about ways to engage and take action.

*Photo: Vaughn Hadenfeldt.*



Scan the **QR Code** to read the Inter-Tribal Coalition's **Land Management Plan**.





## PARTNERING FOR COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION

Each field season, Bears Ears Partnership's cultural site conservation program takes on projects that protect sensitive cultural sites and enrich the living connection to the land, all while mitigating the impact of recreation and visitation.

2022 was no exception — in collaboration with partners including the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC), Living Heritage Anthropology and Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants — **we focused on expanding and finding new opportunities to connect and reconnect Indigenous communities to cultural sites within the Bears Ears region.**

Alongside ALCC crew members, we conducted archaeological surveys and condition assessments for several backcountry sites, laying the groundwork for follow up conservation projects in 2023. With support from the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, crews also worked together to route trails, and construct trailheads around multiple sensitive cultural sites in the Monument.

We also **expanded our partnerships to assist the Bears Ears Native Conservation Corps with an Indigenous-led conservation pilot project** in the Monument, and look forward to continuing this collaborative work in the year ahead!



## THE BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER IS PEOPLE POWERED

As we think about how we can best support Tribes, agencies, and other groups active in the protection of Bears Ears, we know that education is key. That's why, in 2022, we **continued to expand the scope, programming, and offerings at the Bears Ears Education Center (BEEC).**

This year, we provided monthly educational programming on topics ranging from geology and vandalism, to solstice sites and regional flora and fauna, for community members and visitors alike. We also shared Visit with Respect messaging with high schools, colleges, and tour groups visiting the Monument.

**Since reopening to the public in the spring, the BEEC served 4,778 visitors** — sharing information about the Monument and how visitors can explore the landscape respectfully. This volunteer-powered space has continued to improve and expand; we added a new hands-on display of rugs, pottery, and baskets by local Indigenous makers, installed an outdoor paleontology and geology exhibit in the shade structure, and added native perennials and signs to the Native Plants Garden.

There's no doubt this momentum will be carried through the next year. We look forward to scheduling even more educational programming and community events at the BEEC, expanding our outdoor classroom to include a Visit with Respect interactive seating area in partnership with students from the University of Utah, and **continuing the exciting process of renovating the property next door — an old motel we purchased this summer — to support our growing education and community programs.**



Above: R.E. Burrillo presenting on the history of looting in Bears Ears at the BEEC, spring 2022.

Below: The new paleontology and geology exhibit is installed in our outdoor classroom!







## VISIT WITH RESPECT



You may know Visit with Respect (VWR) as an educational program providing visitors with proactive tips and resources on how to respectfully experience and explore cultural landscapes like Bears Ears. That's only the tip of the iceberg.



**This year, we've made strides in growing the scope and scale of VWR, working with partners to share VWR messages in their blogs, brochures, and guidebooks.** VWR tips are even featured on Bureau of Land Management signage at popular trailheads throughout the Monument. What's more, **VWR resources are being shared out on the landscape, thanks to the work of our amazing Ambassadors,** who engage in meaningful conversations to make visitors aware of how they can respectfully interact with the land.





This fall, we also welcomed our new Visit with Respect Program Director, Semira Crank. Her vision is to continue educating visitors on how to protect the cultural resources in the Bears Ears region, while also helping them understand *why* Traditional Indigenous Knowledge should be at the forefront of these conservation efforts. **By educating visitors that this region is where many Indigenous people feel connected to their ancestral roots and regain spiritual healing, they can better understand the importance of visiting with respect.**

In 2023, we will incorporate more Traditional Indigenous Knowledge while working closely with Tribal leaders, federal agencies, and other partners to amplify Visit with Respect, and will continue to expand our Ambassador program — **all so we can better protect Bears Ears for generations to come.**



Visit with Respect

For a list of Visit with Respect tips,  
scan the QR Code or visit

[www.BearsEarsPartnership.org/visit-with-respect](http://www.BearsEarsPartnership.org/visit-with-respect)







## CONSERVING THE “LANDS BETWEEN”

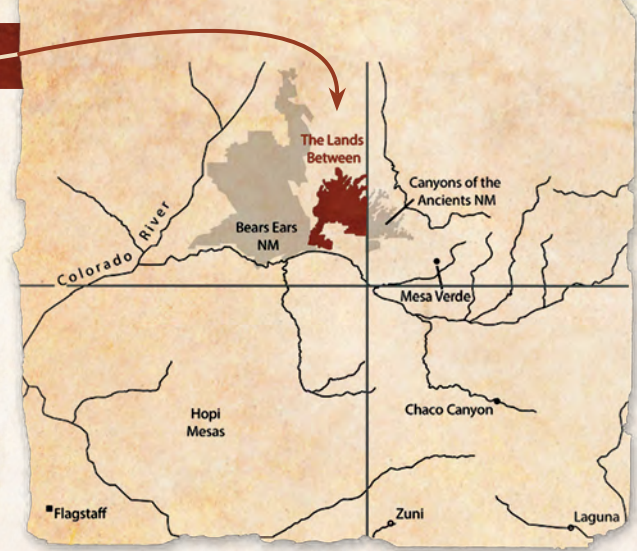
The “Lands Between” — a half-million acres of public and state trust lands, located between Bears Ears and Canyon of the Ancients National Monuments — have long been at risk for oil and gas development, despite it encompassing the highest density of sacred cultural sites in the nation.

Bears Ears Partnership continues to co-lead a coalition of Tribes, Pueblos, and non-profit groups that is prioritizing Indigenous leadership and decision making to advocate for the protection of this sacred and threatened landscape.

During 2022, we facilitated visits to the Lands Between by members of government in the Hopi Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Pueblo of Acoma. We continued to hone our archaeological case statement for the landscape, sharing and supporting archaeological research that exemplifies the region’s immense archaeological and cultural significance.

Finally — thanks to support from our partners at Advocates to the West — **we successfully settled our lawsuit to suspend development on 32 oil and gas leases from 2018** until much more extensive Tribal consultation and environmental analysis is completed.

We remain steadfast in encouraging Bureau of Land Management leadership to pause all new oil and gas leases in the Lands Between until Indigenous leaders have been fully consulted and a “smart from the start” leasing plan has been created. In 2023, **we will continue to work alongside our partners to ensure that the immense cultural significance of this landscape is fully considered in its management moving forward.**



## GATHERING AGAIN TO CELEBRATE!

After a two year hiatus, we were so happy to gather once again with our community this September for Celebrate Cedar Mesa.

Over 200 of you made the trek to Bluff to share in an incredible weekend of education, stewardship, and community. **We fit so much into just a few days together:** we learned from Tribal leaders, agency representatives, topic experts, and Bears Ears Partnership staff; announced our organization's new name; enjoyed the Bears Ears Blowout at Twin Rocks Cafe; and went into the field for stewardship projects on Sunday. **The Celebrate weekend truly exemplified the momentum gained from a community partnering to show support for a landscape we are all working to protect.**

As our organization continues to grow, Celebrate will evolve right along with us. In 2023, we are organizing smaller, stewardship-focused gatherings to continue to connect our community and build partnerships around a shared love for Bears Ears — keep an eye on our website for future opportunities to come together!



Above: Carleton Bowekaty (Former Lieutenant Governor for the Pueblo of Zuni) speaking on the "What's Next for Bears Ears?" panel at Celebrate Cedar Mesa.





## BECOMING BEARS EARS PARTNERSHIP

“ As collaborative planning for Bears Ears moves forward, it’s essential to support Indigenous-led initiatives, researching and applying traditional land stewardship values and practices, within the monument and beyond. **This work requires the collaborative efforts of many groups.**

As the newly named Bears Ears Partnership, **the organization will serve a key role in facilitating these interactions and conversations** through its cultural site conservation and Visit With Respect programs, as well as through expanded field-based outreach with Indigenous communities.

**The name change acknowledges the evolving landscape of this issue, recognizes the benefit of current partnerships, and creates space for future collaborations.**

— Lyle Balenquah,  
Heritage Coordinator







## Bears Ears PARTNERSHIP

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