

FCM in 2020

YEAR END
WRAP-UP



Brighter Days for Bears Ears Ahead

As we move deeper into 2021, we do so with renewed hope — hope for the protections Bears Ears deserves, hope for much-needed resources and hope for real solutions on the ground. But above all, our hope is for healing.

On his first day in office, President Joe Biden ordered a review of the “conditions and boundaries” of Bears Ears National Monument. We are heartened by this important step and hopeful for a thoughtful and thorough evaluation of the protections needed for this globally important landscape.

Bears Ears National Monument is much more than magnificent mesa tops and sprawling canyon systems; **it is a living cultural landscape used daily by Indigenous people and home to cultural sites held sacred** by many Tribes and Pueblos.

And while many recognize Bears Ears as ground zero in the debate over public land protections, at its very core, Bears Ears National Monument is an important step toward environmental justice.

As the first monument designated at the behest of a coalition of Indigenous Nations, Bears Ears is a monumental milestone in recognizing that what we know as public lands today are ancestral Native lands. Indigenous connections to the landscape should be recognized and respected, and Indigenous voices and perspectives should be integral in land management decisions.

Within Bears Ears’ future lies the opportunity to create a first-of-its-kind management plan, one led by Tribes and rooted in Traditional Knowledge. We stand ready to play a supporting role in providing extensive knowledge of issues on the ground, visitor education expertise, and emphasis on archaeological preservation.

While a lot remains to be seen, we hope the path forward leads to Tribal co-management and seizes upon the opportunity to honor Indigenous perspectives in preserving ancestral lands.

a look back at 2020 ...

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A Note from Our Executive Director

Over the last seven years, I've had the honor of working with so many wonderful people to advance the protection and stewardship of the greater Bears Ears region. **We've made tremendous progress building an organization that can step up for this landscape, make a real impact on the ground and earnestly support our Indigenous partners in their efforts to protect sacred sites and ancestral lands.**

As I wind down my time as executive director, I know I will always have Cedar Mesa, Comb Ridge, Indian Creek and all of Bears Ears in my heart. Yet the time for new leadership has come just as an opportune new chapter for southeast Utah and FCM is emerging. The real hard work of protecting Bears Ears and elevating Tribal leadership is only just beginning, and I hope the work I've put in to help build this team, this organization and this vision will continue to bear fruit in the future.

While hope is certainly in the air, I think we can be fairly sure some things won't change. Government can't fix all our problems and provide all the resources needed. Real advocates, passionate volunteers, generous supporters and committed professionals will continue to be needed in order to ensure this globally significant landscape sees the care and protection it deserves. **We thank all of you who have contributed over these last seven years and hope you'll stick with us in the exciting times to come.**

~ Josh Ewing, Executive Director



Preservation in a Pandemic

As we safely gathered with Friends in early March 2020 for our annual Celebrate Cedar Mesa, the world was only learning of the virus that would consume the remainder of the year. As spring stretched to summer, fall and winter, we were challenged — collectively and individually.

At Friends of Cedar Mesa, our work shifted but never slowed. Our staff tackled the majority of our backbreaking and difficult fieldwork

without assistance from our incredible volunteers. And as visitors seeking safe solace on public lands flowed into the region, we focused our efforts on educating them how to visit respectfully online.

We searched for additional funding to supplant individual contributions impacted by an unpredictable economy, and we collaborated with government officials and Indigenous leaders remotely.

Nevertheless, FCM continued to make a measurable difference in southeast Utah. **As we look back on the strange and difficult year that was 2020, we're proud of our work and thankful to you, our Friends, for supporting us along the way.** As health and safety became paramount, we transformed our efforts and, together, never stopped working on behalf of the lands we all love.

Here's to a brighter 2021!



Celebrate Cedar Mesa Friends Gathering 2020.



Field Director Britt Hornsby works with BLM staff on Public Lands Day.



More On-the-Ground Work in 2020

Despite not being able to leverage the full power of our mighty volunteers, FCM field staff still completed more site conservation projects than ever before —

thanks, in part, to a collaboration with World Monuments Fund to help preserve threatened sites across Bears Ears.

In fact, **our field team of two**, often working in conjunction with Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants, **carried out work at 21 sites**, including a large project to preserve a series of damaged kivas in a well-known canyon. Additionally, we worked to build and route trails at multiple sites, constructed fences to keep cattle from causing damage, and completed condition assessments and recordings to inform future work. We also inked an agreement for several upcoming projects on Forest Service lands!

This fall, **our field crews were fortunate to work safely with PPE and social distancing alongside several members of the Ancestral Lands Corps, Zuni Pueblo** — a program designed to engage Pueblo youth in conservation projects on ancestral lands.

FAST FACT

FCM lost 1,700 hours of volunteer labor this year due to the pandemic.



*Above: Volunteers safely distance while documenting rock imagery.
Below: FCM field staff prepare to build cattle exclusion fencing.*

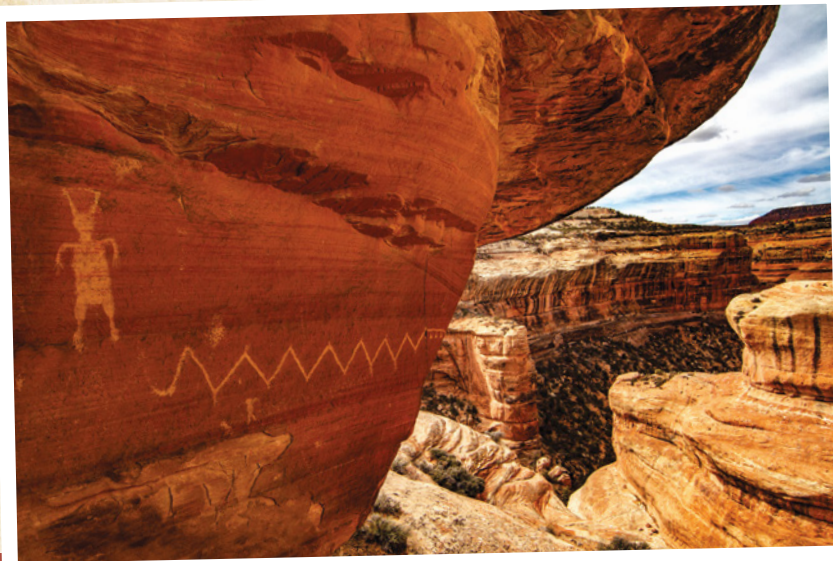



Pushing for Policies that Protect

FCM's continued efforts in 2020 bolstered the case to defend Bears Ears and the Antiquities Act in court. While we certainly wish the case had moved more swiftly toward a resolution, our work behind the scenes ensures future courts will have the best possible information.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Land Management finalized a Monument Management Plan in early 2020 for the reduced monument, a plan sorely lacking true protections, and land managers began work on more specific Travel, Recreation and Cultural Resources plans. FCM attended Monument Advisory Committee meetings to learn of these initial planning efforts, and has worked with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to support their Indigenous-led management planning efforts.

Beyond land management, **FCM helped educate the community on a proposal to frack through Bluff's aquifer**, a precious source of drinking water, and advocated against the development. Thankfully, the application to drill was later pulled. **We also spoke out against a plan to import radioactive waste** from overseas to the White Mesa Mill, located adjacent to the Ute Mountain Ute community of White Mesa.





Important Dates

EARTH DAY: *Thursday, April 22, 2021*

UTAH ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH:
May 2021

PUBLIC LANDS DAY: *Saturday, September 25, 2021*

INTERNATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY DAY:
Saturday, October 16, 2021

A note on Celebrate Cedar Mesa: While we are hopeful for a slow return toward normal in 2021, we will not gather for our annual Celebrate weekend in March. However, please stay tuned as we will assess the situation and potentially spend time with Friends in the fall, if we can do so safely.

Conserving the "Lands Between"

The "Lands Between" Bears Ears and Canyons of the Ancients are ripe with evidence of human history crucial to a larger contiguous cultural landscape that connects Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, Bears Ears and beyond. In the past four years, these lands have been the target of heavy oil and gas leasing, leaving few acres spared.

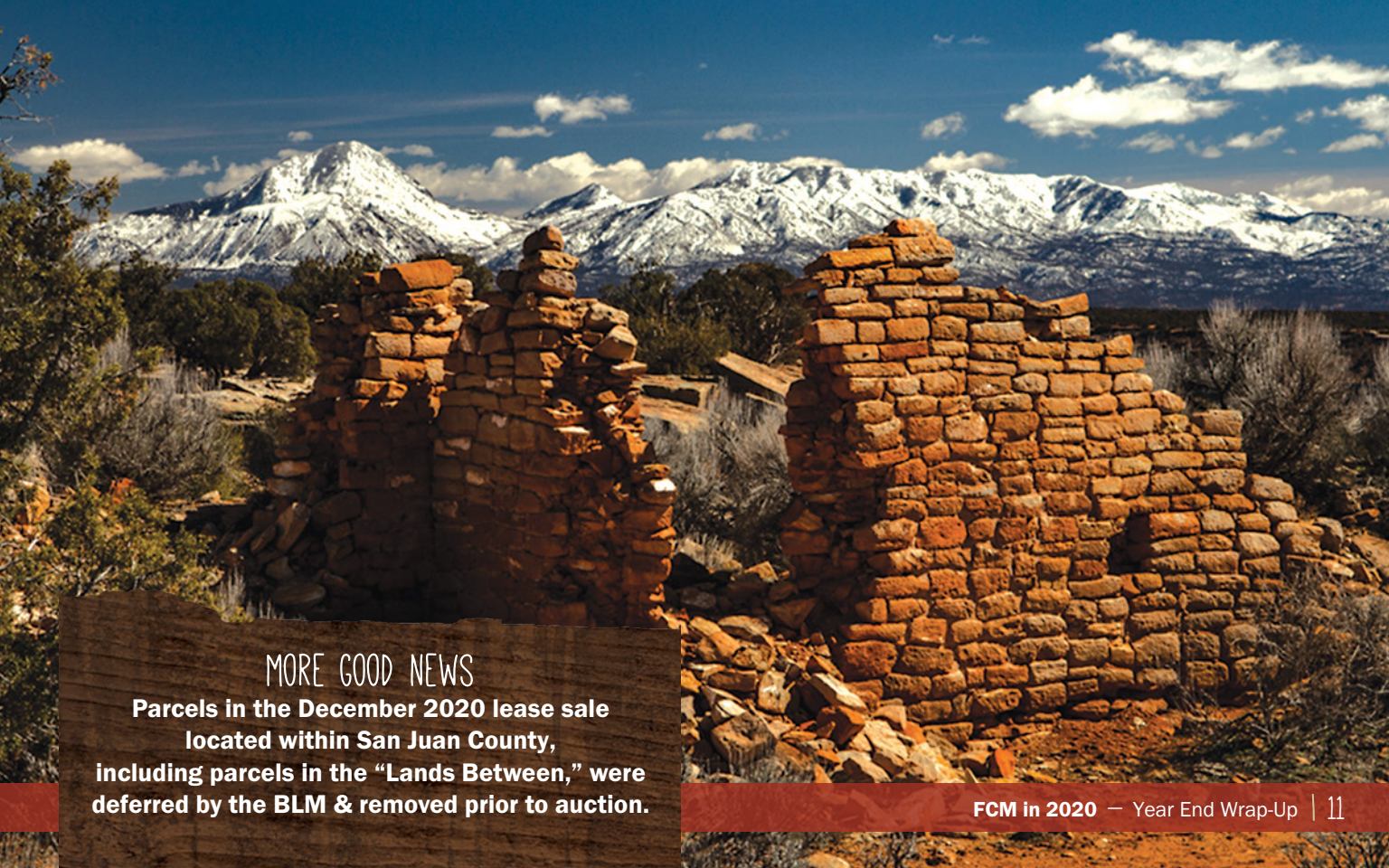
In 2020, FCM organized a cohort of Indigenous leaders and conservation groups dedicated to the protection of this little-known cultural landscape. This collective is committed to Tribal leadership in decision-making and capacity-building for Tribes to engage in the effort.

In the safest manner possible, FCM hosted Tribal visits to the "Lands Between," including visits with the Pueblo of Zuni. If we can continue to do so safely, we will plan new visits with Tribal leaders and archaeologists in 2021.

More recently, **a small group of "Lands Between" partners met with the Biden transition team** to discuss the detrimental impacts of oil and gas development in this region, the shortcomings in Tribal consultation and the status of previous leases.

Fortunately, in his first week in office, **President Joe Biden took immediate action to protect lands across the U.S. threatened by ill-planned development.** While the process to have leases in the "Lands Between" reviewed is a bit complicated, Biden's recent orders to pause new oil and gas leasing and halt any major BLM decisions, allow for the opportunity to rollback some of detrimental leasing under the previous administration and initiate smart planning. With that in mind, a significant effort to reverse course lies ahead, and Friends of Cedar Mesa is prepared to help Indigenous leaders ensure the "Lands Between" are protected.





MORE GOOD NEWS

Parcels in the December 2020 lease sale located within San Juan County, including parcels in the “Lands Between,” were deferred by the BLM & removed prior to auction.



Visitor Information Goes Virtual

After opening for one week in early March, Friends of Cedar Mesa closed the Bears Ears Education Center to ensure the safety of our volunteers, staff and travelers. **But visitor education was more important than ever in 2020.** As people flocked to southeast Utah with the thought that remote wilderness was pandemic proof, the detrimental impacts on the landscape piled up — along with poop. To help direct visitors to appropriate sites and teach them how to visit respectfully, **we shifted our focus to adding more information to our visitor website, BearsEarsMonument.org,** and answering questions via phone, email and social media.

FCM also hosted several **online readings and cultural presentations**, engaging more people than ever before. In fact, the Four Corners Lecture Series hosted by FCM reached 1,800 people.

This program is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and Utah Humanities as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.



UTAH HUMANITIES
Ideas in Action



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Address the Mess



Poop is a problem, and in 2020 FCM vowed to **Address the Mess!** After noticing an increase in, you guessed it, human waste at sites across the region, we decided to do something about it. Not only have we worked with the BLM to place temporary toilets along the highly trafficked Butler Wash, but FCM also gave out 600 free disposable waste bags outside of the education center. **We're encouraging everyone to do their doo-ty and pack out their poop.** Yeah, we didn't anticipate making poop a priority, but somebody's gotta do it!



Visit with Respect

Site Stewardship Goes to the State

2020 was a big year for site stewardship in Utah. In March, **Governor Gary Herbert signed House Bill 163, establishing a state-wide Cultural Stewardship Program within the Utah Department of State History.** The Heritage Stewardship Program, developed by FCM for the Bureau of Land Management, helped lay the foundation for this big step forward. While FCM continues to collaborate on transitioning the program, site stewards carry on with their hard work.

In 2020, 30 stewards monitored 50 sites across the state for BLM, many visiting their sites more than once, contributing to 830 hours of site monitoring!

Meanwhile, **Site Steward Coordinator Wanda Raschko worked to train stewards virtually,** even taking part in the first-ever nationwide site stewardship training with leaders from various programs across the country.

FUN FACT

FCM has helped Edge of the Cedars Museum train over 50 stewards to monitor sites on lands managed by the BLM's Monticello Field Office!



Site steward volunteer contributes to monitoring in 2020.



FCM Launches a Million-Dollar Initiative for Preservation Fieldwork

Friends of Cedar Mesa launched **our most visionary fundraising effort yet** with our sights set on creating a million-dollar impact specifically for on-the-ground preservation work. **World Monuments Fund** (wmf.org), a renowned international cultural heritage preservation organization, **committed the first \$300,000 to kickstart this unique site conservation project.** It's a lofty goal, but one we think we can meet over the next several years. The result? Increased proactive fieldwork designed to reduce damage caused by visitation, cattle, illegal off-road vehicle use, and vandalism!



Friends of Cedar Mesa

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