

YEAR END WRAP-UP

**FCM**

**in 2021**



Friends of Cedar Mesa





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## A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOE NEUHOF



It's hard to articulate just how big a year it has been for Friends of Cedar Mesa (FCM), the greater Bears Ears Region, and me personally. I can't help but be hopeful for the new year as we continue to work for the lands and people we love. **There will undoubtedly be challenges as the pandemic persists, but the important work we do will continue on.**

In 2021, FCM said goodbye to our longtime champion and leader, Josh Ewing, reopened the Bear Ears Education Center (BEEC), and brought on new staff and board members. In addition to hiring a new Executive Director, Deputy Director, BEEC Manager, and Communications Manager, we added two Indigenous leaders to our Board of Directors, Louis Williams (Diné) and Christopher Lewis (Zuni). Our field and education programs continue to grow as we work with Tribal partners, the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and others to protect the cultural and ecological integrity of Bears Ears and beyond. **It's becoming clear 2022 will be a year of growth for all our programs, and we hope you can lend a hand as a volunteer or contributor!**

This past year marked my personal journey to lead FCM, and I couldn't be more excited and inspired in my short tenure. **I'm humbled to work on these lands alongside the Tribes and communities that care for them.**

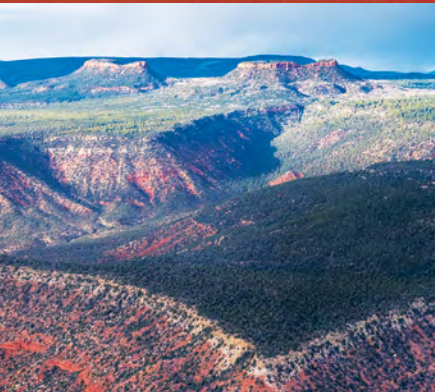
**The biggest surprise has been the sheer volume of impactful work this organization accomplishes.** From recreation management to cultural site preservation and Visit with Respect to working with policy makers — I'm only scratching the surface. We don't often share all that we do at FCM as we have a strong culture of putting partners first and "leading from behind," but our Friends know us well and you couldn't be more valuable.

**Thank you for all the support and please stay involved with our work** as we move to grow our organization and make a difference for the greater Bears Ears region. The work continues!





Above: Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland visiting the BEEC in spring 2021.  
Below: Bears Ears Buttes.



## RESTORED!

2021 certainly closed on a high note for the many who worked tirelessly to protect Bears Ears. **As we continue to celebrate the restoration of Bears Ears National Monument, we look to 2022 with renewed energy.**

President Biden's executive order on October 8, 2021 was long awaited. The uncertainty of the past four years reignited advocacy efforts by Tribal leaders, conservation groups, and people like you who champion protections for this world-class landscape.

The restoration of Bears Ears honors the wishes of a historic coalition of Tribes, acknowledges the significance of this ancestral landscape to Indigenous People, and provides for Tribal leadership and incorporation of Traditional Knowledge in the management of this incredible landscape.

**While this monumental decision is to be celebrated, our work to protect Bears Ears is by no means over.** Unfortunately, this landscape remains a target for the foreseeable future. The Utah Attorney General has hired a law firm to research potential litigation against the restoration — a move that could put Bears Ears back in the crosshairs.

Meanwhile, management planning for the monument must move forward, and Friends of Cedar Mesa is committed to assisting land managers and Tribes in the process. We will also continue to advocate for state lands within the monument to be traded out — a move that would offer these parcels more protection.

As we move forward into 2022, we are reinvigorated and hopeful for the future. **We'll continue to stand with Tribes and defend the unparalleled landscape of Bears Ears.**





*Photo by Richard Bullough*





Above: Volunteers building the new outdoor classroom in the BEEC sideyard.  
Below: Diné artist Venaya Yazzie working on the new VWR mural on the building next to the BEEC.



## THE BEEC IS BACK

**We're not only open once again, we're expanding!** In 2021, Friends of Cedar Mesa reopened the doors to the Bears Ears Education Center (BEEC), and **in a few short months, we welcomed about 2,000 visitors.** It certainly takes a team to tackle the heavy lift of keeping the doors open five days a week, eight hours a day (spring to fall) — but there is no doubt, it's worth it. In fact, beyond providing much-needed visitor information, FCM hosted three public talks, and **we had the opportunity to speak to roughly 250 students and educators.**

With the future of our education program in mind, FCM also **started construction on an outdoor pavilion** that will house new exhibits on the paleontology and geology of Bears Ears and serve as a space to launch a new youth education program to engage students in area schools.

We are certainly thankful for the **volunteers who contributed 1,271 hours** at the Education Center in 2021.



Looking beyond the traditional ways to educate visitors, this year we got creative and **worked with Diné artist Venaya Yazzie to place a large Visit with Respect cultural mural** on the building next door to the education center!

## PERSEVERING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

As the pandemic stretches into another year, we all continue to face significant uncertainty, but we are certain our important work to protect Bears Ears must continue.

Early in the pandemic, **our staff absorbed and continued the great efforts of many of our volunteers**, including work typically done by our Site Stewards and Visit with Respect Ambassadors. And in 2021, we started to safely re-engage our Stewards and Ambassadors, welcomed volunteers back to the Education Center, and worked with volunteers in the field. With safety a top priority – think masking, social distancing, and small groups – **our volunteers gave 2,347 hours of their time this year!**

Though the Bears Ears Education Center re-opened in fall of 2021, **we have continued to enhance our visitor website, [BearsEarsMonument.org](https://BearsEarsMonument.org)**, to provide visitors with an online educational resource, in place of swinging by the BEEC.

Friends of Cedar Mesa is also **adapting the way we host events**, providing for both a virtual and in-person experience. We're excited to bring events, typically available to only those in the Four Corners region, to supporters across the country.

While we are hopeful that things may return to some sense of normalcy in 2022, we are prepared to safely continue the important work that is unique to FCM!



Above: Volunteers stationed outside, spring 2021.  
Below: BEEC reopens, fall 2021.









## CULTURAL SITE PRESERVATION

The complexity and scale of Friends of Cedar Mesa's Field Program has certainly grown in the past several years, and 2021 was no exception. **Our hands-on conservation work is a driving force for preservation in greater Bears Ears.**

This year, with support from World Monuments Fund and others, **we facilitated two large-scale site conservation projects**, including preservation work at River House, a highly visited site along the banks of the San Juan River. These projects, which include archaeological preservation, erosion control, trail work, educational signage, and more, are critical to maintaining the integrity of some of Bears Ears' most heavily visited cultural sites.



*Site conservation efforts in greater Bears Ears.*



*Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps members working at River House.*

**FCM contracted Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps to help with 1,850 hours of this work over the course of 10 weeks!** Working with the Conservation Corps is fundamental to our Field Program, and we are privileged to help engage youth from Pueblos across the southwest in hands-on work in Bears Ears.

Beyond this, we also carried out volunteer projects on Public Lands Day and International Archaeology Day, including removing a worn fence along Butler Wash and constructing stanchions the BLM can use to help guide visitors. What's more, we've made approximately 75 unobtrusive, hand-carved signs for use at cultural sites across the region.



## FRIENDLY FACES MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE

With the pandemic pushing more people to public lands and visitation to the region rising to well over half a million people annually, Friends of Cedar Mesa's Visit with Respect (VWR) Ambassador and Stewardship & Monitoring Programs are more important than ever. **Our volunteers serve as eyes and ears on the ground, helping to report and reduce incidents of vandalism and damage to sites, as well as providing essential visitor education.**

The VWR Ambassador program, in partnership with the BLM, trains volunteers to educate visitors at popular sites. This year, FCM worked with **12 very active VWR Ambassadors who spent 582 hours on the trails, visited 36 different sites, and educated 587 people** while out on the landscape!

The Site Stewardship program is making a difference as well. In 2021, FCM welcomed **15 new stewards**, who will help monitor sites. Overall, and despite challenges posed by the pandemic, **36 stewards monitored 53 sites this year, dedicated nearly 700 hours, and drove more than 13,000 miles** to reach their sites.

FCM **expanded Site Stewardship in the Bears Ears region** by becoming the Regional Stewardship Coordinator for lands managed by the US Forest Service, School Institutional and Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), and National Park Service. Meanwhile, we continue to work closely with the Edge of the Cedars Museum to mentor and manage site stewards for the BLM.



*VWR Ambassadors outside the BEEC.*





## IMPORTANT DATES IN 2022

**Earth Day:** April 22 (*Friday*)

**Utah Archaeology & Historic Preservation Month:** May

**Celebrate Cedar Mesa:** September 23-25 (*Friday-Sunday*)

**Public Lands Day:** September 24 (*Saturday*)

**International Archaeology Day:** October 15 (*Saturday*)

**Native American Heritage Month:** November

**A NOTE ON CELEBRATE CEDAR MESA:** Though we were hoping to be able to gather in person this coming spring, we have chosen to delay Celebrate to the fall to prioritize the health of our community.

**We are so excited to safely congregate in person, come September!**



## VISIT WITH RESPECT



**View Sites  
from a Distance**



**Guide Children  
through Sites**



**Leave Grinding  
in the Past**



**Leave All Artifacts**



**Dogs & Archaeology  
Don't Mix**



**Historic Artifacts  
Aren't Trash**



**Don't Touch  
Rock Imagery or  
Make Your Own**



**Camp & Eat Away  
from Archaeology**



**Use Rubber-Tipped  
Poles**



**Steer Clear  
of Walls**



**Avoid Building  
Cairns**



**Pay Your Fees**





**Use a Fire Pan**



**GPS Reveals  
Too Much**



**Pack Out  
Your Poop**



**Enjoy Archaeology  
Without Ropes**



**Stay on  
Designated Roads**



**Don't Disturb  
Fossils or Bones**



**Don't Bust  
the Crust**



**Visit with Respect**

**For more information on these**

***Visit with Respect Tips,***

simply type this address  
into your browser:

**[BearsEarsMonument.org](https://BearsEarsMonument.org)**

Or, use the camera on  
your smartphone to  
**scan the QR Code below**  
and visit our Bears Ears  
Education Center Website.









## CONSERVING THE "LANDS BETWEEN"

The “Lands Between” Bears Ears and Canyon of the Ancients, home to countless sacred cultural sites, have long been the target of widespread oil and gas leasing. This swath of living, richly tapestried cultural landscape that connects Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Bears Ears remains unprotected, though together we are making great strides to ensure it isn’t sold to the highest bidder.

Over the course of this past year, Friends of Cedar Mesa continued to help lead an informal group of Tribes, Pueblos, and conservation partners in advocating for the protection of this important region. This collective continues to **prioritize Indigenous leadership in decision-making and speaking on behalf of this ancestral landscape.**

In the safest manner possible, FCM facilitated a number of visits to the “Lands Between” by the Hopi Lands Commission and members of the Pueblo of Acoma’s Tribal Historic Preservation Advisory Team. Our team also presented to the All Pueblo Council of Governors Natural Resources Council as well as the Navajo Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

Along with our partners, FCM also **encouraged BLM leadership to pause, if not defer, all new industry-nominated oil and gas leases** in this culturally significant landscape.

Recently, FCM — with support from Advocates for the West — refiled litigation on some oil and gas lease sales in the “Lands Between.”

Meanwhile, FCM’s Preservation Archaeologist, Kenny Wintch, continues to conduct research on the region’s vast archaeological resources.



*Cultural landscape of the "Lands Between."*





Above: Researchers working on the “drone.”  
Below: Field crew & researchers working on the dendrochronology project.



## ADVANCING INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

Friends of Cedar Mesa proudly supported **innovative research in 2021, including a dendrochronology pilot project and drone-based LiDAR research** — both of which provided unique information about the cultural landscape of Cedar Mesa.

In fall 2021, FCM’s Preservation Archaeologist, Kenny Wintch, and Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum Curator and Archaeologist, Jonathan Till, worked alongside archaeologists and remote-sensing specialists for a **first-of-its-kind endeavor in southeastern Utah to document ancient roads using drone-mounted remote-sensing tools**. This ongoing project successfully identified and documented numerous ancient roads in several locations across Cedar Mesa and tested the utility of remote-sensing techniques in different environments, particularly in pinyon-juniper woodland.

While these technologies are relatively new, this project reiterated the exciting potential of remote-sensing tools as a vital component in the future of landscape archaeology!

And more exciting research is helping bring forth **new understanding of how previous inhabitants of the southwest may have utilized trees**. The ancient junipers of Cedar Mesa are living witnesses to centuries of human occupation, and FCM’s dendrochronology project to date old-growth stands of juniper is creating an important body of data. In April, FCM, Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants, and volunteers sampled a total of 60 trees near three different archaeological sites, which revealed a tree dating to AD 1420! Data from this research will contribute to the study of paleoecology, archaeology, and natural resource management practices.







## MEET OUR STAFF!



**Joe Neuhof**  
*Executive Director*



**Lindsay Luttrell**  
*Operations Manager*



**Ana Siegel**  
*Communications Manager*



**Chris Giangreco**  
*Deputy Director*



**Ryan Pelizzoni**  
*Field Manager*



**Sylvia Taylor**  
*Education Center Manager*



**Sarah Burak**  
*Education Director*



**Wanda Raschkow**  
*Site Stewardship  
Coordinator*



**Kenny Wintch**  
*Preservation Archaeologist*



**Britt Hornsby**  
*Field Director*

**We would also like to extend a warm welcome to our two new board members, who joined Friends of Cedar Mesa in 2021.**

- **Louis Williams**, a member of the Diné Nation, owns and operates Ancient Wayves River and Hiking Adventures.
- **Christopher Lewis**, a member of the Zuni Pueblo, is a fiber artist who is a part of the Cedar Mesa Perishables Project.

*We are so excited to welcome both Louis and Christopher to the FCM board!*





## Friends of Cedar Mesa

[www.FriendsofCedarMesa.org](http://www.FriendsofCedarMesa.org)

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