

Mesa Verde Foundation

Stewards of an Ancient Treasure



FALL NEWSLETTER

2023

LETTER FROM THE MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Summer has peaked at Mesa Verde, and we are edging toward autumn. Last winter's snow persisted late into spring. When it melted, the landscape erupted into lush green. Native grasses seemed to grow up overnight. The wildflower bloom was spectacular and long. We waited for the monsoon rains that usually arrive around the July 4th weekend, but it has been a hot, dry summer for us. That makes it easy to daydream of the coming seasons that will bring crisp autumn nights (and an annular solar eclipse in mid-October) and brilliant winter days.



Fall and winter are great times for a visit to the Park, which is open year-round. The schedule and availability of services changes a bit, so be sure to check the Park website at www.nps.gov/MEVE for more detailed information and to learn about any weather-related or construction closures. Fall colors spice up the Mesa Verde landscape. Winter brings the sparkle of snow and a different kind of soundscape. Last year, visitors enjoyed cross-country skiing and snowshoeing at the Morefield Campground area and on the Cliff Palace Loop

Road, both of which we allow to “snow in” for winter recreation. There were also days that storms and windblown snow drifts overwhelmed our ability to keep the road open, so do check the webpage and social media before you visit.

The Chapin Mesa Museum reopened this summer. We're proud to be showing a new, award-winning film there, *Footprints of our Ancestors*, a partnership with the Mesa Verde Foundation, Mesa Verde Association and the Colorado Historical Fund. Our work to design new museum exhibits is progressing as well. This winter and spring we will replace the Cliff Palace Observation Deck and hope to begin stabilization of the Spruce Tree House alcove arch.

Thanks to the Mesa Verde Foundation for supporting projects in 2023! The removal of feral horses continues to be successful. Last fall and this summer we captured nearly 30 horses. Operations have been safe, with no injuries to horses or humans. A partner organization has been able to place them in sanctuaries or homes. Foundation donations supported preservation activities and trail work near Oak Tree House and at Step House.

Kayci Cook Collins, *Mesa Verde Superintendent*

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Some Hidden Gems of Mesa Verde



Knife Edge Trail

Part of the mission of the Mesa Verde Foundation is to promote understanding, appreciation and preservation of the cultural, historical and natural resources of the Park. In light of our mission, we feature some hidden gems in the Park that are accessible to the public.

Superintendent's House

When Jesse Nusbaum became the Park's Superintendent in 1921, he felt that it was important to move the Park's headquarters from Mancos to what was then the Spruce Tree Camp, but the Camp needed more permanent structures than the temporary tents that were perched on the top of Chapin Mesa overlooking Spruce Tree House. Sited at the junction of where the short Spruce Tree Canyon spur splits from the main Spruce Canyon, the Pueblo Revival style Superintendent's House, designed by Nusbaum himself, set the architectural

style for the rest of the Administrative District. The four-room house was constructed using local materials and was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1987.



Superintendent's House

Knife Edge Trail

Named after the rock precipice above, the Knife Edge Trail provides a 2-mile out-and-back hike along the historic and scenic roadbed that went by the same name. The trail is well maintained, and with only 60' of elevation change, it's a relatively easy and rewarding hike. Most visitors to the Park rush to see the cliff dwellings, but there is so much more to the Park than just the archaeological sites, such as these stunning views to the north and west. Bird life and wildflowers are plentiful. The original road was constructed in 1911, as interest in visitation began to increase. However, with constant rock slides from the Knife Edge wall above, maintenance became a nightmare. As a result, new routes were continually being explored. The road remained in use until 1957, when the present-day Morefield-Prater Tunnel cut through Prater Ridge. The trailhead is marked along the main Morefield Campground road.

Park Point Fire Lookout

The Park Point Fire Lookout can be found at the end of the Park Point Overlook Trail. The .2-mile roundtrip walk takes visitors to the highest point in the Park at 8,572'. This strategic location provides a commanding 360-degree view of the Park and surrounding areas. The lookout was built in 1939 and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Fire is a constant concern for Park management. In fact, over 50% of the Park has burned over time. During the devastating Bircher Fire in 2000, firefighters wrapped the lookout in aluminum foil to save it. Today, visitors can peer inside and see an Osborne Fire Finder tool, which was designed by a Forest Service employee in 1915. Most of these devices were manufactured between 1920 and 1935 and are still used in conjunction with other, more modern, fire detection and tracking systems. The tower is often occupied during the stormy season of July and August.

Farming Terraces

The Ancestral Puebloans were masters at constructing check-dams and farming terraces in



Park Point Fire Lookout

natural drainages to capture as much water as possible. These terraced gullies were especially important during prolonged dry conditions, when the Pueblos experienced diminishing results from their plantings on the mesa tops. Moisture and soil would collect behind the dams, creating additional fertile and productive land. To experience these terraces, take the .5-mile Farming Terrace Trail loop that starts on the short road to Cedar Tree Tower from the Chapin Mesa Road.



Farming Terraces

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Dwelling Stabilization and Preservation

If visitors to the Park are fortunate, they might encounter some dwelling stabilization work in progress. The Park has an extensive archaeological program with a mission “to conduct, encourage and facilitate archeological and ethnographic research focused on prehistoric and historic occupations in Mesa Verde”. To accomplish this mission, not only does the Park employ a highly trained and diverse staff and seasonal interns, but it also utilizes the skills of partner organizations, such as the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC), shown at work here on a kiva at the Far View Sites. ALCC maintains several field offices throughout Indian Country to carry out its vision “to lead our Nations back to ecological and cultural well-being by engaging Indigenous youth in conservation programs that reconnect participants to the land, their cultural heritage and their traditions”.

Fewkes Cabin

This cabin was built in 1916 on the west side of Spruce Tree Canyon as the Park’s first ranger station. The next year, it was converted to a museum—one of the first museums in a National Park. The cabin was named for Dr. Jesse Fewkes, a Smithsonian archaeologist who did extensive work on documentation, excavation and stabilization throughout the Park from 1908 to 1930. Stephen Mather, the Director of the Park Service in 1917, commented, “In this building, Dr. Fewkes may lecture to the visiting public on the history of Mesa Verde and on his archaeological work in the Park.” Thinking that the Park needed a much better museum to properly display artifacts, Superintendent Jesse Nusbaum designed the Chapin Mesa Archaeological Museum and had the Fewkes Cabin dismantled and moved to its present location on the east side of Spruce Canyon in 1927.

Chapin Amphitheater

Not far from Fewkes Cabin on the rim of Spruce Canyon, visitors can find Chapin Amphitheater. While no longer in use, it remains an interesting and peaceful place to ponder the past.



Stabilization Crew at Far View Sites



Fewkes Cabin



Chapin Amphitheater

Quoting from *Mesa Verde National Park—An Administrative History 1906-1970* by Ricardo Torres-Reyes, “Another improvement was the new campfire circle completed in June 1938, constructed at its present location on the rim of Spruce Canyon, commanding a view southward into Navajo Canyon. Advantage was taken of a natural amphitheater, and with the weather-stained sandstone seats, the surrounding forests of juniper and piñon, which were left undisturbed, and careful transplanting of vegetation, the entire layout was so fitted into the landscape as to seem the result of the forces of nature, rather than the work of man. The whole atmosphere lent itself admirable to the campfire ceremonies and Indian dances that were held there each evening during the summer.”

Plaster Design in Balcony House

Visitors on a tour of Balcony House can get a good look at an original plaster design by peering into a room just off Kiva Plaza. The design motif is a common one in Mesa Verde country, many observers thinking that these triangles represent mountains. Using dendrochronology on juniper beams in the structure, archaeologists determined that Balcony House had three periods of construction: 1180 to 1220, 1240 to 1270, and again in the 1270’s. By 1300, it is believed that most residents of Balcony House had migrated on. Ranger-led tours of Balcony House typically run mid-May through mid-October. Tickets must be purchased in advance through www.recreation.gov and entering “Mesa Verde” in the search box.



Plaster Design in Balcony House

“Conversations from the Mesa”

Tuesday, September 12th, 2023

4:00 p.m. (Mountain Time)

Telling a More Inclusive Story: Creating New Interpretive Media

Presented by:

Kristy Sholly, Chief of Interpretation & Visitor Services, Mesa Verde National Park, and Amy Ireland, Visual Information Specialist and Chapin Mesa Museum Exhibits Project Manager, Mesa Verde National Park

Tuesday, October 10th, 2023

4:00 p.m. (Mountain Time)

To Be Determined

Tuesday, November 14th, 2023

4:00 p.m. (Mountain Time)

How Does Mesa Verde Get Its Water?

Presented by:

Mike Rubin, Chief of Facility Management, Mesa Verde National Park

Webinars are presented LIVE. They are free and open to anyone interested in attending by registering in advance.

For more information and to register, visit www.mesaverdefoundation.org.

Did you miss a webinar and wish to view the recording? Recordings of previous webinars can be found on our YouTube channel using @mesaverdefoundation9564, or by searching for Mesa Verde Foundation in the YouTube search bar. Please subscribe to our channel to be notified when recordings are posted.



Lizards of Mesa Verde

Yellow-Headed Collared Lizard

Visitors to Mesa Verde will often see lizards darting around rock formations or simply sunbathing on warm rocks. There are eight species of lizards that roam the mesas and canyons of the Park. They consume insects, ants, beetles and spiders, and they are prey primarily for birds. Here are two of the more common species.

Yellow-Headed Collared Lizard

These colorful lizards can often be found basking on rocks in the middle of the day in the Park. The bright males are highly vigilant, even when they appear to be relaxing and hanging out. One of the reasons for their alertness is that the males are extremely territorial, so they are watching for the encroachment of other males. These lizards measure 8-15" in length, including their tails. They can run on their hind legs at speeds up to 15 mph. The males have especially large heads with powerful jaws. Their heads are used as a weapon in combat, as they fight for territorial dominance and mating selectivity. The females lack the coloration of the males. Each year, they lay eggs in one or two clutches of four to six eggs.



Northern Plateau Lizard

Northern Plateau Lizard

The metallic blue stripes on the sides of the males help to make them easily identifiable. The females are slightly longer than the males and can measure 4-5" in length. They typically have a clutch of five to twelve eggs in May and again in June. The males can be seen doing rapid push-ups to ward off others. These lizards hibernate during the cold winter months, but they occasionally come out to bask in the sun on warmer afternoons. They have a lifespan of about five years.

Mesa Verde National Park's New Film Premiere

Footprints of our Ancestors: Mesa Verde National Park

On Friday, June 2nd, 2023, the Mesa Verde Foundation hosted the premiere of the Park's new film, *Footprints of our Ancestors: Mesa Verde National Park*, at a sold-out event at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO. The premiere was an opportunity to acknowledge everyone who contributed to the film's production and to recognize the twenty-six Pueblos and Tribes with a sacred connection to Mesa Verde.

The evening began with a cocktail reception and heavy hors d'oeuvres, followed by a formal program hosted by MVF Board Chair Jana Leslie. The program commenced with a reading of the Fort Lewis College Land Acknowledgement by MVF Board Member and Fort Lewis Professor Andrew Gulliford, PhD, and a Blessing delivered by Lorelei Cloud, Vice Chairman, Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Shannon Clifford, MVF Executive Director, spoke on behalf of the Mesa Verde Foundation, Superintendent Kayci Cook Collins spoke on behalf of the Park and Mesa Verde's Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services, Kristy Sholly, recognized everyone who helped to make the film possible.

The first public viewing of the film was the highlight of the evening. The Film Premiere event raised over \$10,000 to support the work of the Mesa Verde Foundation!

The film *Footprints of Our Ancestors: Mesa Verde National Park* focuses on contemporary Pueblo and Tribal relationships to Mesa Verde, as told by members of those communities. Produced by Boyd Productions with assistance from No Reservations Productions, the film is narrated by Robert Mirabal of Taos Pueblo and includes music composed by

Ehren Kee Natay of Kewa Pueblo and Diné. It incorporates interviews with Brian Vallo of Pueblo of Acoma and Madeline Naranjo of Santa Clara Pueblo, along with an appearance by the Oak Canyon Dancers of Pueblo of Jemez.

The film's creation included three years of planning, filming and consultations with the Park's Native Interpretation Working Group and its affiliated tribes. It is the result of a collaboration between the Mesa Verde Foundation, Mesa Verde National Park and the History Colorado State Historical Fund. Since its premiere, the film has received the "Best Documentary Short" award from the American Golden Picture International Film Festival and has been chosen as an "Official Selection" to be included in the Accolade Global Film Competition and the Four Corners Film Festival.

In celebration of the film's inclusive storytelling and its Indigenous narrative, the Mesa Verde Foundation plans to bring live screening events to additional locations in Colorado and the Four Corners Region. MVF is hosting a film screening event at the University of Denver on September 22nd. Additional details can be found on the MVF website at www.mesaverdefoundation.org/tours-events. Watch for updates about future screenings, and make plans to attend an event in your area!



Kayci Cook Collins speaks with Tribal Representatives (l), Jana Leslie and Lorelei Cloud (r)

Donor Opportunities and Project Funding

You may have wondered, “How does the Mesa Verde Foundation come up with our Donor Opportunity List each year?” The answer is actually quite interesting.

Formally, the list starts with our Executive Director, Shannon Clifford, requesting a list of project opportunities from Park Superintendent, Kayci Cook Collins. We say “formally” because the list of projects is informally in development all the time. With the Park’s over \$134 million in deferred maintenance (2022), it is not difficult to come up with project ideas.

Ideas also come from the more than 500,000 guests who visit the Park each year. These visitors come from all over the world and include thousands of student visitors from kindergarteners to PhD candidates. Park staff members also meet regularly with our 26 tribal partners that have ties to Mesa Verde. They regularly provide both guidance and suggestions. It



Wheelchair Accessible Ramp in Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

should come as no surprise that the 80 full-time and 45 seasonal Park employees also contribute heavily to the Donor Opportunities List. Finally, even Park vendors get into the act from time to time.

As you might imagine, Superintendent Kayci and her Leadership Team then have the tough task of filtering all of these inputs. They discard some and add others, as they develop and refine the Park’s Donor Wish List. A variety of opportunities have been identified this year. You can find them on the Donor Opportunities table.

Opportunity Categories

One thing that you may notice in the Donor Opportunity List is that projects are categorized. The idea of Opportunity Categories is new, providing a way to group similar, or related, types of opportunities. We find that donors may be interested in one type of project over another. The categorization helps. For example, one person may be interested in educational projects versus another person whose interest is in buildings and grounds projects.

Donor Opportunities			
Opportunity Category	Project	Amount	Status
Ready for the Future	Develop Virtual Experience for Balcony House	\$10,000	Unfunded
Ready for the Future	Create Digital Images of the Museum Collection	\$500 - \$10,000	Unfunded
Preservation	Conserve Prehistoric Vessels	\$1,700 per object	Unfunded
Preservation	Far View Ruins Group Site Assessment	\$22,000	Unfunded
Preservation	Scanning Historic Superintendent Reports	\$5,000	Funded by MVF
Preservation	Step House Emergency Stabilization	\$10,500	Funded by MVF
Environment	Feral/Trespass Horse Removal for 2023	\$10,000	Funded by MVF
Environment	Pinyon Juniper Forest Resiliency	\$10,000	Unfunded
Environment	Research Impacts of Fire Suppressant Chemicals	\$158,000	Unfunded
Environment	Re-routing of Fewkes Trail	\$10,500	Funded by MVF
Accessibility	Accessibility Ramps Chapin Mesa Museum***	\$29,000	Unfunded***
Accessibility	Accessibility Improvements Museum Exterior	TBD	Unfunded
Education	Transportation Grants for Four Corners Schools	\$20,000	Unfunded
Education	Ancestral Public Lands Internship	\$14,000	Unfunded
Park Improvements	E-Bikes for Bike Patrol/Trips Between Sites	\$4,000	Funded by MVF
Park Improvements	Bear Food Lockers for Campground (\$1,500 ea.)	\$30,000	Partially Funded by MVF

*** Mesa Verde Foundation received funding to construct two accessibility ramps in 2021 from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. Construction of these 2 ramps was completed in 2022. The need for two additional ramps was identified this year by the Chapin Mesa Museum Design Committee as they were working to upgrade, and refresh museum exhibits. These two new ramps will complete the accessibility flow through the Museum.

There can be a relationship between one Opportunity Category and another. Providing a mechanism for virtual tours of Balcony House helps the Park to be *Ready for the Future*, and it also helps in *Preservation, Education and Accessibility*.

The virtual tour is available to people all over the world through the internet. By cooperatively developing and presenting an enhanced script with tribal members and park rangers, we will be better able to tell the story of the Balcony House site. The virtual tour is formed from real photographic images. Virtual technology is then applied, thus preserving the site and the voices of Mesa Verde as they are today. As an *Education* project, we believe that virtual tours will bring the ancient civilizations of the Americas to life for students all over the globe. Imagine being a 4th grader in Boston—or Paris for that matter—reading about the Ancestral Puebloans, and then being able to take a virtual tour. We are sure that educational outcomes will be improved.

Finally, we believe that researchers, and those who aren't able to get to Mesa Verde, will use the Park's digital tours. A virtual tour may just be the beginning of an individual's love affair with America's Southwest, or it may be as close as an individual ever gets. Either way, a virtual tour will provide *Accessibility* to this mysterious, sacred and beautiful land.

Research funding is also a Donor Opportunity

There is so much that we don't understand. As scientific tools are developed and improved, new doors open to better understand the environment, prehistoric man and Ancestral Puebloans. Annual funding for research will help us to advance our knowledge.



Chemical Analysis of Plasters and Pigments Research



Ceramic Vessel Contents Research

An example of potential research funding can be found in the remarkable Park pictographs. How were the paint pigments made, and where did they come from? How was the plaster made that we sometimes find on walls?

Chemical Analysis of Plasters and

Pigments Research would reveal important information, and most likely some surprises. Were all these components from local sources, or did some of them come from many miles away? Evidence shows that Ancestral Puebloans traded as far away as the Yellowstone area, and even farther to Mexico and South America.

Another project of interest is **Ceramic Vessel Contents Research**. What will chemical analysis reveal about the final contents of a ceramic vessel? Can you imagine holding an Ancestral Puebloan mug in your hand that was dated to approximately 1210 AD where the chemical analysis shows that it last contained cocoa? Where did the cocoa come from? Who harvested it? What journey did the beans make to get to Mesa Verde, and with what traders?

Conclusion

We thank our Mesa Verde donors and volunteers for everything! There is much that has been done, and much left to do. Investing in Mesa Verde National Park provides a gift for generations to come. The Park was one of the first sites designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, as a place of "Outstanding Universal Value". UNESCO World Heritage sites are thought to have "special importance for everyone". The Park is certainly one of the crown jewels of our National Park System.

Concerning the Donor Opportunity List and all the Projects listed: there is not enough space in the newsletter to go into detail on each project. For further information, please call 303-321-3120, or email Shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org.

We asked, and you made it happen! Thank you!

On June 8th, the Mesa Verde Foundation kicked off a campaign to raise money to purchase two electric bikes for Ranger use. Less than a month later, on July 6th, we exceeded our \$4,000 goal by raising \$4,674! Our supporters prove to us time and time again that we can count on them!

In addition to the funds raised, an e-bike was donated and delivered to Mesa Verde in early July. The donated bike, named Blue Bird, has been warmly welcomed to her new position as a member of the e-bike team.

Since the goal was to provide two e-bikes for Ranger use, and then one bike was donated, the additional funds were used to purchase helmets, tools, spare tubes and other accessories to support the new e-bike program.

The e-bikes will be used by Park staff for short trips between work sites on Chapin Mesa and to support Interpretive Patrols on the Mesa Top Loop and the Wetherill Mesa Loop. They will reduce the carbon footprint created by vehicles for the same trips.

**Thank you for supporting our e-bike campaign!
Donors are critical to the success of this program.**



Mesa Verde Foundation is pleased to welcome Ben Calabaza to our Board of Directors



Ben Calabaza (Kewa) has 19 years of marketing and design experience. He is a managing partner with iRoots Media, LLC, a design and marketing group based in Santa Fe, NM. Calabaza has led many local and national branding/communication projects, including most

recently the Center for Native Arts and Cultures, ACLU Indigenous Justice Convening, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, the Native American Community Academy and the Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund.

He was an adjunct instructor at the Institute of American Indian Arts for five years, where he taught Introduction to Digital Arts, the Art of

Public Speaking, First-year Seminar and Cross-Country Running. Calabaza also worked as the Public Relations Manager for the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian (2018-2022) and assisted in gaining market position in the Santa Fe area through a comprehensive marketing plan, leading to first place in the 2019 ABQ Journal North Readers' Choice Awards. He was also part of the team that received a C.F.W. Coker Award from the Society of American Archivists for innovative development in archival description or descriptive tools that enable archivists to produce effective finding aids for the Indigenous Digital Archive Treaties Explorer (DigiTreaties.org).

Ben also serves as Secretary on the Board of the Chamiza Foundation, a private foundation dedicated to the thriving of Pueblo communities. His interests include Pueblo traditional textiles, weaving and pottery.

Join us in congratulating Mesa Verde's recent retirees

We are grateful for their service to the Park

Bill Nelligan, Deputy Superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park and Yucca House National Monument, retired July 29, 2023, after more than thirty years of government service. Bill arrived at Mesa Verde in 2009 and spent the last fourteen years there. He was involved in many important projects at Mesa Verde, including opening the Park's Visitor and Research Center in 2013, creating more opportunities for visitors to experience areas of the Park by bicycle (Wetherill Mesa's hike/bike use of the Tram Road and the Federal Highways project to expand parts of the Mesa Top Loop Road shoulder), and dozens of other important resource protection, interpretive and facility projects.

Prior to coming to Mesa Verde, he served as the Deputy Superintendent at the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area and as a Cultural Resource Specialist at Gateway National Recreation Area HQ in New York City. He started his NPS career in the early 1990s as an Architectural Historian in the Midwest Regional Office. Before coming to the NPS, Bill served in active duty with the US Army in the Gulf War. Bill continued to serve in the US Army Reserve, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2008. Bill and his wife, Terri, will reside in Dolores, Colorado, where they plan on taking time to enjoy their family (six children and five grandchildren), travel and seek God's will for their future.

Robert "Bob" Haggerty, Zone Safety Manager, retired at the end of July after 30+ years of federal service. He came to Mesa Verde in 2016 and spent seven years guiding the safety programs for seven units of the National Park Service: Mesa Verde National Park and Yucca House National Monument, Aztec Ruins National Monument and Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site and Canyon de Chelly and Navajo National Monuments. Prior to his arrival at Mesa Verde, Bob worked for the Bureau of Land Management for many years, but the Parks hold a special place in his heart. He is a proud military veteran and enjoyed participating in the

annual Veterans Stand Down in Cortez. Bob plans to continue his connections to safety and the National Parks in retirement, particularly in the realm of training.

Jill Blumenthal, Education Coordinator and Volunteer Program Manager, retired in April 2023 after thirty-nine years in National Parks. Jill began her career in Zion National Park, and went on to work at Everglades National Park, Montezuma Castle/Tuzigoot National Monuments, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Death Valley National Park, Petrified Forest National Park and Mount Rainier National Park. From 2000 - 2010, Jill worked seasonally in Mesa Verde, and in 2012 joined the permanent interpretive team. Jill enjoyed sharing the complex and continuing history of Pueblo people with visiting students of all ages. She was also passionate about supporting and expanding volunteer opportunities in Mesa Verde. Jill and her NPS-retired husband, Frank Cope, will remain in Cortez. Retirement will find them tending their sizable garden and traveling the country to visit family and NPS friends.

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Simply visit mesaverdefoundation.org and make a one-time \$30 license plate donation. Once the donation is processed, you will be issued a PIN number that you will use when registering your vehicle with your county motor vehicle office. Please be aware that to issue the plate, the state will charge an additional (one time) \$50 fee to process your order.