

Mesa Verde Foundation

Stewards of an Ancient Treasure

SPRING NEWSLETTER

2026



LETTER FROM THE MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT

This year is a big one for important anniversaries. We are celebrating the 250th anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence from England, the 150th anniversary of Colorado statehood and the 120th anniversary of two pieces of legislation important to Mesa Verde National Park. In June of 1906, the U.S. Congress passed the Antiquities Act and the act to establish Mesa Verde National Park. The two related laws emerged from increasing concern about widespread looting, vandalism and unregulated excavation of Indigenous cultural sites, especially in the American Southwest. Mesa Verde's spectacular cultural sites and the loss of items to collectors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries became the most famous example of why protection was needed.



“ There will be events and programs sprinkled throughout the summer and fall, from a special evening program on June 29th to the Indigenous Arts and Culture Festival, various cultural demonstrations and night-sky programs.”

Just weeks after President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law, Congress passed the bill to create America's sixth national park, which “TR” signed into law on June 28, 1906. Mesa Verde remains the only national park established to preserve nationally significant cultural resources. Many other archeological and cultural treasures are federally protected, but as national monuments. Nearby Yucca House National Monument, managed together with Mesa Verde, was proclaimed under the Antiquities Act authority in 1919.

We recognize these important anniversaries

throughout the year, especially as we move into our summer visitor season. There will be events and programs sprinkled throughout the summer and fall, from a special evening program on June 29th to the Indigenous Arts and Culture Festival, various cultural demonstrations and night-sky programs. The Mesa Verde Foundation also has events scheduled to highlight the anniversary.

Aside from anniversaries, the park has an active roster of infrastructure projects. Overlook barriers on the Mesa Top and Cliff Palace Loops are being replaced this spring, and roadwork is planned for a few locations along the main park road—Far View Sites, Cedar Tree Tower, and parking lots at the Far View Terrace and Far View Center. The first four miles of the main road are due for chip sealing. We also have a waterline project (courtesy of the Great American Outdoors Act—Legacy Restoration Fund) that will replace the 60 year-

old line from near the park entrance to Morefield Campground. These projects support safe public access and use while protecting the park's resources. Projects like these could be considered “birthday gifts” to America's sixth national park.

We look forward to hosting you at Mesa Verde National Park, whether this year or in the future. Our job is to ensure the preservation of this special place in perpetuity for you, your children and future generations, as part of our American heritage.

Kayci Cook Collins, *Mesa Verde Superintendent*



Evolving Technology Helps Researchers Shed New Light on Archeological Sites

Office of Archeological Studies Researcher Shelby Jones at Tonto National Monument, Arizona. Photo credit: Office of Archeological Studies.

Early archeologists and researchers aiming to understand and interpret historical sites such as Mesa Verde National Park, which offered plenty of physical clues but no written records, often resorted to informed conjecture to reach conclusions. As the field of archeology grew, particularly in the 20th century, its practitioners gained access to increasingly sophisticated and evolving tools to more fully and accurately tell the story of people in the distant past.

Many of those tools are used at the New Mexico Office of Archeological Studies (OAS) in Santa Fe, a premier research laboratory and educational entity that houses several artifact-dating technologies and reference collections. It also offers public and private entities, including the National Park Service (NPS), archeological services and is a center for educational outreach. OAS partnered with Mesa Verde researchers in the 1990s to reconstruct organic, black-on-white paint pottery firing techniques.

OAS's toolbox of archeological dating tools and techniques provides insight into how Ancestral Puebloans

and others lived their everyday lives, according to Shelby Jones, Laboratory Manager, Educator, and Volunteer Supervisor with OAS's Archaeomagnetic, Radiocarbon Sampling, Analytic Laboratories.

"If you go to your toolbox in your garage, you have a hammer, a screwdriver, a wrench. They all help you with different things," she said. "Archaeological chronology tools are similar. You have dendrochronology, ceramic typology, carbon dating, and archaeomagnetic dating. They all have their own goals, limitations and benefits."

Jones leads the Archaeomagnetic Laboratory at OAS, which allows researchers to date and study the charred remnants of material, mostly burned soil, found at hearths and in structures in the Four Corners and far beyond. It sheds a more accurate light on the lives of ancient peoples, not just in the American Southwest but around the world. It compares the trapped magnetic field within artifacts to known variations in the Earth's magnetic field, first recorded by 15th-century sailors using compasses.

The magnet technology powering those modern tools was discovered by a contemporary of the

Ancestral Puebloans, 11th-century Chinese polymath Shen Kuo. He developed a directional compass using magnets that allowed Chinese sailors to navigate to the far reaches of the known oceans. Many millennia later, magnets similar in concept to those in Shen's compass advanced to form the basis of archaeomagnetism.

While archaeomagnetic dating's roots go back centuries, its modern development and use began advancing in the 1940s and accelerated in the 1980s and into recent decades. The OAS lab is the only dedicated archaeomagnetic lab in the Western Hemisphere, housing more than 5,700 samples from around the world, with more than 51,000 specimens.

Jones describes archaeomagnetic dating as providing a snapshot in time guided by the equivalent of millions of tiny compasses trapped in burned dirt. When materials are significantly heated, they lose their original magnetic signature. Upon cooling, they retain the magnetic signature of the Earth on that day. When put into the laboratory's spinner magnetometer, a device about the size of a bread box, researchers can study the material's preserved signature, allowing them to compare the moment a fire was put out with recorded changes in the Earth's magnetic field.

While the OAS lab is the only dedicated archaeomagnetic dating lab in the U.S., some 600 researchers around the world working in the field



Office of Archeological Studies researcher Shelby Jones works with a spectrum magnetometer. Photo credit Chandler Buchfink, Office of Archeological Studies.

of Earth magnetism collaborate and share information. As archaeomagnetic study grows and evolves, so too does the body of knowledge it creates.

While Jones' specialty is archaeomagnetism, she notes that many tools—used separately or together—can provide 21st-century archeologists and researchers a more holistic view of the past. "Archaeomagnetism is just one tool that can be used to study the chronology of a site," she said. "Together with other chronology techniques—including but not limited to radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, Optically Stimulated Luminescence, thermoluminescence, and stylistic changes in architecture and pottery—archaeologists can piece together a more complete use history because each method looks at the chronology of the feature or sample in a different manner and from a different point of view."

"Understanding the greater context of human occupation of a site can inform on use practices and culture," she said.

As an example, Jones points to an archaeomagnetic dating project in 2021-22 at Tonto National Monument in Arizona (part of a larger NPS project at the site), where parts of the upper cliff dwelling had burned. Researchers held three separate hypotheses about when charring occurred: from the original inhabitants of the structure (there from 1300 to 1450); later fires set by nomadic tribes that reoccupied the site; or the U.S. Army in its 19th-century campaigns in the West. Archaeomagnetic study of charred samples from two separate areas dated the fires to no later than 1750, well before the U.S. Army marched West and well after the original inhabitants left. Thus, findings point to nomads who reoccupied the site.

The OAS offers researchers, archeologists and even private companies and government entities access to these tools. Jones is also laboratory director (along with Marvin Rowe) of the OAS's Low Energy Plasma Radiocarbon Sampling Laboratory, founded by Marvin Rowe, who invented the technology. It uses radiocarbon dating (developed in the 1950s),

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

one of the more common and accurate dating techniques, to examine decay in naturally produced radioactive isotopes, common to all living organisms. It can date materials up to 44,000 years old, although for archeological purposes it is most accurate to about 15,000 years. It has been particularly valuable in dating rock art. Importantly, Jones says, this method of plasma sampling for radiocarbon dating is minimally destructive to samples, using specimens as small as 30-millionths of a gram. “We’re dating dust,” she said.

Yet not all analytic methods are high-tech. The OAS also features an Osteology Laboratory, which examines faunal (animal) remains gathered from archeological sites. Guided by a code of ethics that emphasizes respect for remains and ancient cultures, the lab gains insights not just into diet and butchering techniques, but also into how bones and other materials were used as tools.

Mesa Verde and NPS researchers (separate from the OAS) also have relied on another common dating tool, dendrochronology, the study of tree rings that sheds light on the age of trees and when wood used in dwellings was harvested. It also shows patterns of abundant precipitation or severe drought (including one in the late 13th century, when many researchers

suggest the Ancestral Puebloans began migrating away from the area).

Dendrochronology has been used since the early 1920s, resulting in more than 4,300 tree ring dates from more than 140 sites at Mesa Verde. Researchers usually extract core samples from wood (although cross sections have also been used). According to the NPS, many sites at Mesa Verde, including Far View House, Spring House and Long House, have been assessed using dendrochronology. Research shows a building “boom” using mostly juniper or pinyon pines from the year 1000 to the mid-to- late 1200s. The latest known sample was from 1281.

Yet, as the field of archeological dating comes into its own and advances, an existential threat looms. While many people still pursue the field of archeology, it also struggles to attract and keep career archeologists and researchers in esoteric, multi-disciplinary research fields (such as archaeo-magnetic dating).

Jones, in her early 30s, is part of that next generation of scientists. Her passion for the field emerged from rock hunting expeditions with her grandfather when she was young. She describes him as a teacher and mentor who sparked her interest in geology, informing her studies as an undergraduate and doctoral student. “I had no idea I could make a career of playing in the dirt,” she said. Jones said she hopes there are more people like her grandfather to inspire a new wave of scientists to take the baton from some of the giants in the field of archeological dating.

“They are the patriarchs and matriarchs of our field, and these people will go down in history,” she said. “We need new people so they can overlap with these legends and learn everything they possibly can, be the sponges so that we can continue to bring these really esoteric studies all together and continue to produce comprehensive archeological data.”



Dendrochronology plug from Oak Tree House at Mesa Verde.



Celebrating the 120th Anniversary of Mesa Verde National Park

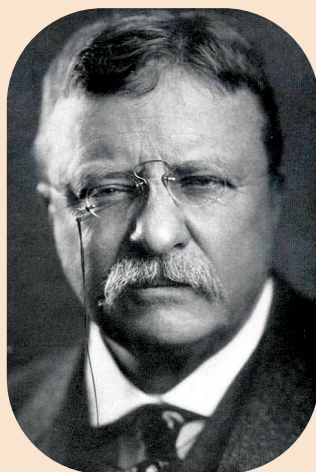
The Mesa Verde Foundation (MVF) is celebrating the 120th Anniversary of Mesa Verde National Park throughout 2026, marking more than a century of preservation, conservation and connection to this extraordinary cultural landscape.

A series of events is taking place during the anniversary year to honor Mesa Verde's legacy and support its future. In January, the year began with *120 Years: Connecting Mesa Verde and the Antiquities Act*, a presentation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The celebration will continue in June in Durango, Colorado, with the Mesa Verde 120th Anniversary Celebration. In September, all interested parties will be invited to the MVF Symposium in Denver.

Throughout this milestone year, the Foundation remains focused on these key goals:

- securing increased support for programs and projects at Mesa Verde National Park,
- spreading the word about MVF's purpose to promote understanding and appreciation of the park,
- growing MVF's membership, and
- building on its strong track record of fundraising success.

Supporters are encouraged to join the celebration by participating in MVF events, helping spread the word about MVF's mission and/or becoming an MVF Friend or Fellow.



President Theodore Roosevelt. Photo credit NPS.

Friend Members, those contributing \$100 and up, receive discounts on MVF programs, invitations to MVF events and bi-annual MVF newsletters. Fellow Members, those contributing \$1,000 and up, receive all Friend Member benefits, plus a basket weaving kit and link to a video tutorial by Christopher Lewis (Zuni Pueblo), a live Zoom Q&A with Shannon Clifford, MVF Executive Director, and potentially annual park passes (depending on membership level). All Members at every level share the pleasure and privilege of sustaining the park through their contributions.

As we honor 120 years of preservation, we invite you to help protect and uplift this remarkable place for future generations. By joining our events, becoming a member, and sharing our mission, you play a vital role in preserving Mesa Verde's stories and spirit. Together, we can ensure that its legacy continues to inspire.

Educational Resources offered by Mesa Verde National Park: Bringing History and Culture to the Classroom

Mesa Verde National Park offers a rich array of educational resources to connect students and educators with one of the most significant archaeological landscapes in North America. Through engaging films, interactive programs, immersive field experiences and virtual learning opportunities, the park provides multiple ways for teachers to bring the stories of the Ancestral Pueblo people into the classroom. Supporting and expanding access to these resources is a shared goal of Mesa Verde National Park and the Mesa Verde Foundation's Education Committee, which is committed to making the tools easy for teachers to discover, access and use.

The Mesa Verde National Park Film

The Mesa Verde park film, *Footprints of our Ancestors*, released in 2023, is a powerful introduction to the park and its history and is often a starting point for learning. Shown at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum inside the park and available for educational use, the film offers an overview of the Ancestral Pueblo people, their architecture and their enduring legacy. With compelling visuals and expert narration, the film provides historical context that enhances classroom discussions and helps students understand the cultural significance of Mesa Verde long before and after a park visit.

For teachers, the film serves as a flexible tool—it can be used as a standalone lesson, a pre-visit orientation or a post-visit reflection. Its concise format and engaging storytelling make it accessible for a wide range of grade levels.

The film can be found at www.nps.gov/meve/.

Ranger in the Classroom

The Ranger in the Classroom program brings Mesa Verde directly to students wherever they are located. Through in-person talks or virtual presentations, park rangers share their expertise in archaeology, history, geology and preservation. These sessions allow students to interact with knowledgeable professionals, who offer firsthand insights into life at Mesa Verde and the ongoing work to protect it.



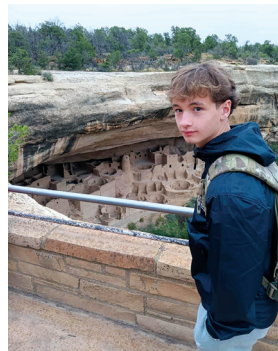
A Ranger visits a classroom.
Photo credit NPS.

For educators, Ranger in the Classroom is an invaluable way to enrich curriculum and spark curiosity. Students can ask questions, explore artifacts through images and demon-

strations, and gain a deeper understanding of how national parks preserve cultural heritage.

Find out more at www.nps.gov/meve/learn/education/rangers-in-the-classroom.

Field Trips to Mesa Verde National Park



Student at Mesa Verde.

Few learning experiences compare to a field trip to Mesa Verde National Park. Walking among cliff dwellings, exploring museums and exhibits and hearing stories directly from rangers create lasting impressions for students. Field trips allow participants to connect geography,

history, science and cultural studies in a meaningful, real-world setting.

However, coordinating a park visit can be challenging for schools, especially those with limited resources or long travel distances. Thanks to a grant from Acceleragen Energy, the Mesa Verde Foundation can help support transportation costs for schools in the Four Corners area that want to experience the park in person. Find out more at www.nps.gov/meve/learn/education/field-trips.

Virtual Tours and Digital Learning

For students and educators unable to travel to the park, Mesa Verde's virtual tours and online resources provide an accessible alternative. Digital tours allow students to explore cliff dwellings, landscapes and exhibits from their own classrooms, offering an engaging way to experience the park, regardless of location or budget.

Virtual learning tools also offer flexibility. Lessons can be easily integrated into existing curricula, used for



A Ranger shares Mesa Verde through virtual learning. *Photo credit NPS.*

distance learning or shared with students who want to explore topics independently.

Find out more about virtual and digital learning at www.nps.gov/meve/learn/education/virtual-learning and www.nps.gov/meve/learn/photosmultimedia/multimedia.

Supporting Teachers through the Mesa Verde Foundation

The Mesa Verde Foundation plays an essential role in enhancing educational access and opportunities. Through its Education Committee, the Foundation is focused on making all of Mesa Verde’s educational resources—films, ranger programs, field trips and virtual tours—more visible and accessible to teachers. By improving awareness and usability, the committee aims to ensure educators at all grade levels can confidently incorporate Mesa Verde into their teaching.

Additionally, the Mesa Verde Foundation offers a scholarship for teachers interested in participating in the Fall Tour. This scholarship mitigates financial barriers and allows educators to experience Mesa Verde firsthand alongside historical and cultural experts. Participants gain deeper knowledge, fresh lesson ideas and renewed inspiration that they can bring back to their classrooms and share with their students.

If you are interested in learning more about this scholarship, please call the Mesa Verde Foundation office at 303-321-3120, or email shannon@mesaverdefoundation.org.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Mesa Verde National Park’s educational tools provide students with more than historical facts—they foster an appreciation for cultural preservation, critical thinking and the relevance of the past to the present.

Together, Mesa Verde National Park and the Mesa Verde Foundation are sharing pathways that connect classrooms to one of the nation’s most remarkable cultural landscapes—whether through a screen, a ranger visit or an unforgettable trip to the park itself.

Welcome Mike Oldham, newest MVF board member



The Mesa Verde Foundation is thrilled to welcome the newest member of our board of directors, Mike Oldham.

Mike has held global leadership roles in software, broadcast media, cable television, advertising, internet-focused technology, real-estate development and entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavors. He co-founded FrontPoint Advisors, a Denver-based management consulting firm focusing on advising executives in increasing the enterprise value of their businesses. Before founding FrontPoint, Mike was an innovative CEO and board member with a track record of building award-winning companies. He has successfully grown businesses, management teams, customer relationships and industry partnerships around the globe.

In addition to his professional experience, Mike has served on numerous nonprofit boards and has supported initiatives in education, veteran services and nonprofit organizations (including Missouri State University, CanDo MS Foundation and the University of Colorado Heritage Society). Mike joined the board of the Mesa Verde Foundation in 2025 and has a personal connection to the area through his daughter, who lives near Mesa Verde National Park.

Mesa Verde Foundation Board of Directors

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- Peter Pino, Advisor and Board Member, In Memoriam
- Shannon Clifford, MSNPA, Executive Director
- Kim Paulin, Office Manager



Elk in tall grass. Photo credit NPS.

By Paul Morey (Mesa Verde Chief of Natural Resources), with contributions from Farley Ketchum Sr. (Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Member, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Steward, Bear Dance and Sun Dance Chief, former Brunot Agreement Chair).

Many visitors are surprised to learn that elk live in Mesa Verde National Park. Although often elusive, they are most commonly seen in fall. Those visiting in September or October may hear or glimpse them in early morning light during the elk breeding season, or rut, when male elk (bulls) compete for females (cows). Bulls gather to defend groups of cows (harems). Their high-pitched bugles echo through the canyons from sunrise to mid-morning before they settle in to rest for the day.

One of the most reliable places to hear or see elk is along the main park road at the pullout below Far View Lodge in Soda Canyon. Visitors arriving between sunrise and 9 a.m. may hear bugling or see elk moving through the canyon. With patience and an early start, you may witness one of Mesa Verde’s most memorable autumn experiences—the echoing bugle of a bull elk.

Today, at least 75 elk spend part of the year inside the park, though many more roam nearby public lands and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe’s lands. Historically, elk were far less common in this region.

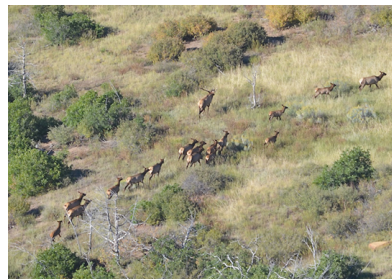
Elk have lived in North America for at least 15,000 years. By the late 1800s, heavy market and subsistence hunting nearly wiped them out in Colorado. By 1910, fewer than 1,000 elk remained statewide. Wildlife managers responded by transplanting elk

from Wyoming in the early 1910s. The population rebounded, and by the mid-2020s, Colorado supported an estimated 280,000 elk.

Mesa Verde likely serves as an important elk refuge. Hunting is prohibited within the park, offering elk a safe home. Notably, many large bulls are often observed inside the park year-round, suggesting that some individuals may remain there instead of migrating to higher elevations in the La Plata Mountains, where hunting pressure is greater.

Although Ancestral Pueblo people lived alongside elk, archaeological evidence from Mesa Verde contains relatively few elk remains. Elk were probably less abundant near settlements than smaller game such as rabbits and turkeys, which were easier to hunt. However, elk still played a meaningful role in daily life. Archaeologists have found elk bones shaped into tools—scrapers, digging implements and decorative tubes—and elk antlers were used for chipping petroglyphs and as masonry pegs.

For the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, elk used to be a main part of tribal members’ diets. Elk continue to hold cultural, nutritional and spiritual importance. Members still harvest elk on tribal lands and nearby federal lands under rights established through the Brunot Agreement of 1873. Every part of the animal is used. Elk ivory—the upper canine teeth—may be



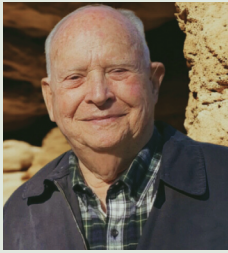
A herd of Elk on the move.
Photo credit NPS.



Elk at Mesa Verde.
Photo credit NPS.

sewn into women’s dresses as a symbol of their husband’s hunting skill. Elk meat is often shared among tribal members, and elk hides are tanned with elk brains for cultural uses. The park and tribal members are constantly looking for opportunities to increase collaboration on hunting access and other natural resources management activities.

Jim Wilkins, Mesa Verde Foundation Director Emeritus



By the end of 2025, Jim Wilkins was finishing his third three-year term as a Director of the Mesa Verde Foundation and would be term limited. At its October board meeting, the Board of Directors, wishing to honor his remarkable

service to both the Foundation and the park, voted to name him an Emeritus Director, allowing him to continue his involvement. Happily, Jim accepted this honor. His work with the Foundation, however, is only a recent chapter in his remarkable story.

Jim was born in Oklahoma City on Christmas Day, a special birthday for a special man. His family moved frequently: Lafayette, LA, and Omaha among the places they called home. They spent a brief time in Denver when Jim was in middle school and his first year of high school. He returned to attend the University of Colorado, where he majored in history and political science and minored in business.

After college, Jim took a job in sales at Carpenter Paper in Omaha, where he was quite successful. However, Denver kept calling to him so he moved there to join his father, Clarence, and older brother, Grant, in the family's outdoor advertising business. Jim specialized in creating decals for the sides of trucks so that the entire truck didn't have to be painted.

Following some disruptions, he left the family company and took a sales representative job back in the paper business with Nationwide Papers in Colorado Springs. At that time, Nationwide had more than 10,000 items in its catalog, including all kinds of packaging, labels, pizza boxes, wrapping materials, cups and food containers. Jim, with a twinkle in his eye and an irresistible smile, did very well. His most profitable effort was selling railroad cars full of gummed label sheets to the Walter Drake Company, which produced huge quantities of personalized address labels. In his modest way, he attributed his success to good timing, but there was more to it than that.

Nationwide asked Jim to head up its national sales training efforts, but that job would have meant uprooting his family again. His wife and children resisted. They moved back to Denver, where he began a new

career in residential real estate. He retired in 1995, giving him time to indulge his passion for community service.

Jim's deep interest in history, going back to his college days, led him to Denver's Four Mile Historic Park. Built in 1859, the Four Mile House, the oldest standing structure in the Denver area, was a stop along the Cherokee Trail that serviced wagon trains heading west. Jim joined the board, served as its chair and trained docents for years. He remains an emeritus director to this day.

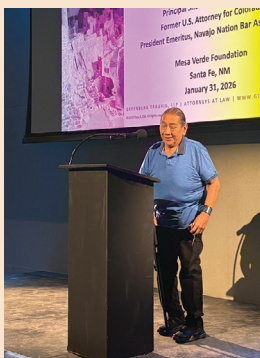
That same passion for history led Jim to Santa Fe, where he bought a second home. From there, his interest increasingly centered on Native American history. He loved attending the religious and celebratory dance festivals in nearby pueblos, particularly Santo Domingo, Cochiti, Tesuque and Taos. His natural curiosity led him to learn about the Penitentes, a lay Catholic brotherhood that developed in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado after the territory gained independence from Spain in 1821, when the formal church structure diminished. Jim visited the villages of Truchas and Las Trampas during Holy Week to observe Penitente customs and rituals.

Noting his deep interest in Southwestern history, Jim's brother Grant (himself a past member of the Mesa Verde Foundation Board) suggested that Jim join the board, which he did 11 years ago. He has held various leadership positions, including serving as chair. He most recently led the Governance Committee, where he successfully recruited and trained numerous new board members. Jim is also a Foundation Fellow and a charter member of the Foundation's Legacy Society.

As if his service to the Foundation weren't enough, Jim has served on the boards of many other organizations, including the Rotary Club of Denver (past president), the Denver Rotary Club Foundation (past president), the Iliff School of Theology, the Griffith Centers for Children (emeritus trustee), the Shining Stars Foundation, and Hastings College (honorary trustee). Jim notes that at one time, he was on eight boards, which turned out to be too many. People who have been on boards with Jim know that he doesn't join just to have his name on the letterhead or website. He rolls up his sleeves and gets to work, raising money and strengthening the effectiveness of those boards. We salute Jim's deep commitment to community engagement and his passion for the history of the Southwest and particularly Mesa Verde National Park.

120th Anniversary Kickoff

In January, the Foundation hosted a kick-off event in Santa Fe commemorating the establishment of Mesa Verde National Park in 1906—making 2026 its 120th anniversary. The event included light refreshments and regional dishes prepared by The Feasting Place of Santa Clara Pueblo.



Freddie Armijo of Santa Ana Pueblo offers Blessing.

Mesa Verde Foundation Executive Director Shannon Clifford gave opening remarks. Freddie Armijo, the former Lieutenant Governor of the Santa Ana Pueblo followed, leading a prayer asking for guidance and a blessing over the proceedings.

Kayci Cook Collins, Superintendent of Mesa Verde

National Park, provided an update on the affairs of the park including visitation statistics, staffing trends, maintenance plans, funding opportunities for supporters and some of the challenges that the park is experiencing.

A highlight of the evening was a presentation by Troy Eid (rhymes with “side”) entitled *Mesa Verde at 120: The National Park that Changed the World*. Congress established the park in 1906 by passing the Mesa Verde National Park Act. The Act protected archaeological and cultural resources, in addition to wilderness and landscapes, making it the first park recognizing human beings and their contributions.

At that time, Congress also acknowledged that the federal government needed to protect and manage irreplaceable cultural sites by passing a companion



Guests enjoy tastings from The Feasting Place of Santa Clara Pueblo.

bill, the Antiquities Act of 1906. A key element of this legislation was to criminalize the excavation and removal of artifacts, ruins and human remains—recognizing such antiquities as public property.

It was further noted that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) began listing World Heritage Sites in 1978, with Mesa Verde on the initial list.

Troy Eid is a principal shareholder in Greenberg Traurig LLP, one of the world’s largest law firms, and co-chairs their American Indian Law Practice Group. He served as the 40th U.S. Attorney for Colorado, appointed by George W. Bush. He is one of the top experts on public safety on Native American and Alaska Native tribal lands and served as the Chairman of the bi-partisan Indian Law and Order Commission under President Barack Obama. He also served as President of the Navajo Nation Bar Association from 2018-2022. A competitive ultramarathoner, Troy won the Grand Master’s Championship in the annual Race Across Scotland (220 miles in 93 hours). Troy grew up in Colorado and is a graduate of Stanford University and the University of Chicago Law School.

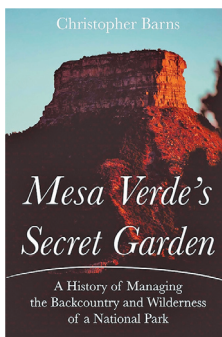


Troy Eid presents at kick-off event.

The Santa Fe event was the first of many planned for this year to honor the establishment of the park. The Mesa Verde Foundation thanks all participants and encourages you and your friends to come to any of our future events.

A Special Gift for Donors: *Mesa Verde's Secret Garden*

This May, the Mesa Verde Foundation is pleased to offer a unique opportunity to connect more deeply with the history, stewardship and hidden stories of Mesa Verde National Park.



Cover of Barns' book.

The first 25 people who donate a minimum of \$100 to MVF during May 2026 will receive a signed copy of *Mesa Verde's Secret Garden: A History of Managing the Backcountry and Wilderness of a National Park* by Christopher Barns, published by the University of New Mexico Press.

Barns is a nationally recognized expert on wilderness policy and public lands stewardship. He retired in 2015 from the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, where he played a significant role in shaping wilderness management across the United States. Barns was the lead author of the Bureau of Land Management's 2012 Wilderness and Wilderness Study Area policies and has co-authored numerous reports and law journal articles on wilderness management.

Mesa Verde's Secret Garden is an authoritative and thoughtfully researched history of how Mesa Verde National Park's backcountry and wilderness areas have been managed over nearly 120 years, from the park's earliest days to today. Drawing on unpublished primary sources from the park's archives, including internal memos,



Mesa Verde Wilderness Proposal from the 1970s. Image credit NPS.

interviews, reports and handwritten notes, the book looks at how management philosophies have shifted over time in response to changing views on preservation, access, archaeology and wilderness protection.



Mesa Verde wilderness. Photo credit NPS.

The book explores why Mesa Verde is the only congressionally designated, land-based wilderness area in the National Park System that prohibits all recreational use and asks compelling questions about what it means to

protect landscapes that the public may never physically experience. In doing so, Barns sheds light on the park's lesser-known terrain beyond the cliff dwellings, highlighting the delicate balance between safeguarding thousands of archaeological sites and allowing natural processes to continue undisturbed.

Barns wrote and directed the PBS documentary *American Values: American Wilderness*. He has volunteered in Mesa Verde National Park since 2017, deepening his personal connection to the landscape his book examines.

In addition to a signed copy of the book, eligible donors will also receive a set of high-quality color prints featuring photographs and maps personally selected by the author as significant additions to the book's story—materials that provide further visual context and insight into Mesa Verde's hidden landscapes.

To conclude the month, donors will be invited to an exclusive Zoom presentation and live Q&A session with Barns on May 28th, offering a rare chance to hear firsthand about his research, discoveries and perspectives on the future of wilderness stewardship.

Your donation directly supports the Mesa Verde Foundation's mission to preserve, protect and interpret this remarkable cultural and natural landscape for future generations.



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