

Friends of Petrified Forest National Park

Working together we can
make a difference!

Issue 6, April 2014



Devil's Playground

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Opening New Lands

In a move 21 years in the making, Petrified Forest National Park announced the opening of 14,650 acres of park expansion lands on April 2nd to the visiting public.

The lands were acquired by the park through transfer from the Bureau of Land Management or purchase from willing private sellers since the Petrified Forest Expansion Act was passed in 2004. The Act authorized the park to expand by approximately 125,000 acres from 93,533 acres before the Act was passed.

Park expansion was first proposed in the 1993 General Management Plan for the purpose of adding adjacent lands rich in both paleontological and archaeological resources. Arizona's elected officials, including Senator McCain, former Senator Kyl, former Representative Hayworth and former Representative Renzi were instrumental in the passing of the Expansion Act.

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Petrified Forest Featured in National Parks Magazine

If you haven't seen the Spring 2014 National Parks magazine, you need to! Petrified Forest National Park is featured in an article discussing the change of message provided to visitors. From "Don't steal the wood" to "Better than ever" the new message encourages visitors to explore the unique resources of the park, rather than just driving through and seeing it from a distance.

National Treasure

The only facility designed by architect Richard Neutra still remaining in the National Park system is at Petrified Forest National Park.

The Painted Desert Community Complex, designed by famed American architect Richard Neutra and his partner Richard Alexander, was an important facility in the design history of National Park buildings. It was one of only two facilities designed by Neutra in the National Park system and is the only one remaining after the recent demolition of the Cyclorama at Gettysburg.

The master-planned combination of all park functions into one complex is a big part of what makes the Painted Desert Community Complex special. It marked the first time that maintenance shops, visitor center, administrative offices, concession services, community facilities, and employee housing were all designed into the same project. It remains rare in that sense and is beginning to receive national attention for its significance as an example of modernist architecture in the National Park system.

By recently naming the Painted Desert Community Complex a National Treasure, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has signaled its willingness to enter into a partnership with the park on the rehabilitation of the complex. The partnership will mean a higher profile for the facility in the historic preservation community as well as the potential for fundraising on a national scale. There could be a companion role for the Friends in fundraising and volunteer activities.



Images from the original and today's Painted Desert Community Complex.



Thank you!

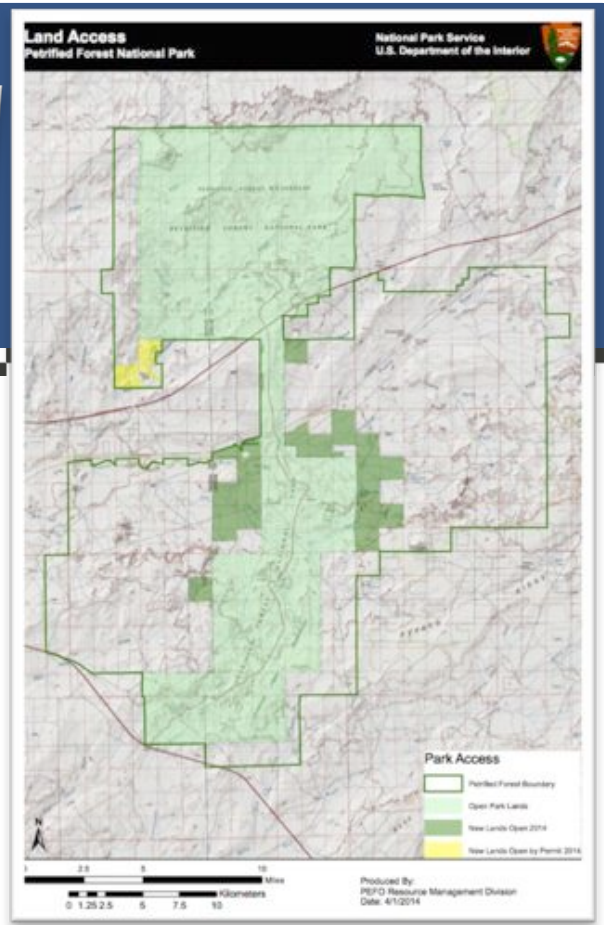
Thank you to Mrs. Joyce Madorna for her very generous gift in memory of her husband John toward the trail between the Painted Desert Visitor Center and the Rim Trail.

Thanks to Mike and Joan Snader for their gift in support of an intern to help create a rock art management plan and their gift to replace the wayside exhibit at Newspaper Rock.

Thanks to Gary and Connie Grube for their donation in support of an unspecified wayside exhibit.



Devil's Playground and a clam bed site on the new lands.



Opening New Lands

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The lands to be opened include an area called Billings Gap, a route between mesas where the fossil remains of 200 million year old clam beds can be seen and where interesting paleontological finds have already been made by park staff.

Another portion of expansion lands will provide access, by permit only, to the southwest portion of the Petrified Forest Wilderness, an area called the Devil's Playground for its geological formations. That portion of the Wilderness has been difficult to access previously because it is over 6 miles one way from the existing Kachina Point

access. The new Devil's Playground access will reduce the hike by two thirds.

The National Park Service has had important help from The Conservation Fund in acquiring private lands from willing sellers. The National Parks Conservation Association also brought an anonymous donor to help with the purchase of some of the lands being opened.

"We couldn't have made these new lands available for public enjoyment without the help of our partners at The Conservation Fund and National Parks Conservation

Association," said superintendent Brad Traver. "And we also want to thank superintendents Cummins, Hellickson, Baiza, and Spencer and their staffs, as well as Glenna Vigil and her staff in our lands office who, over the last 21 years, brought Petrified Forest National Park to this important milestone."

More new lands are planned for opening in 2015.

We are official!

The State of Arizona officially recognizes the Friends of Petrified Forest National Park. We are now seeking 501(c)3 charitable organization status from the IRS. Thanks to Dr. Jeanne Swarthout, Mike Snader, Kevin Dahl, and Dr. Robert Breunig for their work on the organizing Board for creating the official Friends of Petrified Forest National Park!



Visitors enjoying the Giant Logs Trail.

Looking Forward

The Learning Center Project

Over the winter Petrified Forest National Park submitted a project request to the National Park Service for a new building to be called the Learning Center.

The building will include a science laboratory in which lab technicians can interact with visitors through glass walls and monitors. A small space will be available for public exhibits pertaining to current scientific work. A classroom for presentations and offices for science staff will also be a feature of the Learning Center. And the park's paleontological museum collection will be housed in the new building.

The Learning Center will be located in the Painted Desert Community Complex, in a location initially intended for a dormitory, adjacent to the public plaza where new exhibits are being installed this year. This location perfectly marries public accessibility, staff convenience, and historic compatibility with the rest of the Complex.

The Learning Center is estimated to be about 4500 square feet in size, on one level, and will cost approximately \$2 million. Plans are for construction in 2018 but funds for this type of project are very competitive. There is always a chance that the park may never

receive the funding.

Park officials are hoping to attract academic partners to contribute a portion of the cost of the new building. Partners could then utilize the facilities as part of their Petrified Forest fieldwork. The park will seek an architect to draw a rendering of the proposed building sometime this year.

If financial partners are found, it is likely the Friends of Petrified Forest National Park would be a key organization in receiving the funds and making them available to the park.

Volunteer Day

On Saturday April 12th, a combination of volunteers, Arizona Game and Fish staff, and park staff met at the former Paulsell Ranch headquarters to take on fence removal and vegetation clean-up.

The barbed wire fence crew removed 1.5 miles of barbed wire fence and coiled it neatly with the machine they brought. The mesh fence crew removed 1.1 miles of mesh fence, hand rolled it into coils, and hauled it back to headquarters. In both cases, the removal of these obsolete fences will make it easier for wildlife like the pronghorn to

move freely through the area.

The vegetation crew cut and pulled trees and shrubs that had grown around and among the historic headquarters buildings, creating a fire hazard as well as a threat to structural foundations.

The weather cooperated with sunshine and light winds (for springtime). There was even enough time at the end of the day to take a side trip to an impressive rock art site nearby.

Thanks to all who participated in this very successful day!



Friends Advisory Board

The Friends of Petrified Forest National Park has a very distinguished Advisory Board. These accomplished people continue to work with and within Petrified Forest National Park.

Dr. Sidney Ash continues his work on describing the Upper Triassic flora of the Petrified Forest. He recently described a new plant from the park, *Elatocladus puercoensis*, and provided redescriptions of several others. Dr. Ash continues researching historic aspects of the park such as original military wagon road routes and the 1879 collection, under the orders of General William T. Sherman, of two petrified logs from the Lithodendron Wash for the Smithsonian Institute.

Dr. David Fastovsky has long been interested in the fossil soils of the Petrified Forest and their association with ancient vertebrate animals. In recent years he has focused on the determination of radioisotopic dates for park sediments, co-publishing a paper with the first dates in 2011. He is currently a co-investigator on a project funded by the National Science Foundation to conduct high precision dating of the Chinle Formation across the Colorado Plateau.

Dr. Randall Irmis is currently involved in four projects in the park. He is helping write the description of *Revueltosaurus callenderi*, a Triassic reptile skeleton he helped collect in 2004. He is helping write the description of a partial dinosaur skeleton that he discovered and also helped collect in 2004. He is involved in looking at carbon isotopes in fossil plants from the park to determine

historic CO₂ levels during the Triassic. And Dr. Irmis is a co-investigator of the National Science Foundation funded “Colorado Plateau Coring Project.” This project seeks to collect paleomagnetism, isotopic ages, and other data from the entirety of the Chinle Formation exposures in the park, as well as to collect clues to the early evolution of dinosaurs and a potential mid-Late Triassic extinction event.

Dr. Kevin Padian was the leader of a team from the University of California (Berkeley) who did extensive paleontological work in the park in the early 1980s. He and his team relocated historic fossil localities and discovered many new ones, collecting numerous new fossils. This work forms the foundation of all current paleontological work done in the park. Dr. Padian has remained involved with the park as a scientific advisor, and many of his students continue to work in the park as volunteers and interns.

Dr. Nancy Riggs studies ancient river cobbles to determine the source areas for rivers which deposited the Chinle Formation. She is also looking for evidence of the volcanic mountain chains that provided the large amounts of ash to the area during the Triassic, helping ensure preservation of the ancient forests. Dr. Riggs pioneered the first radioisotopic dating efforts for the Chinle Formation, featuring the Black Forest bed in the north end of the park.

Dr. Nicole Cerveny has developed the Rock Art Stability Index and routinely brings students to the park to apply its principles to various rock art panels in the park.



Group picture from the Volunteer Day clean-up on April 12th at the former Paulsell Ranch headquarters.

Join the Friends Group today!

You can be a member of the Friends of Petrified Forest National Park! Contact Kevin Dahl for more details.

kdahl@npca.org

For specific information about park projects, contact the park superintendent, Brad Traver.

Brad_Traver@nps.gov

Visit the park's official website to learn more about the park and its resources.

www.nps.gov/pefo/