

# Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

## Version 2.0

### 5.0 Intrinsic Qualities

The asset inventory database was completed in 2000. Although all of the nationally significant intrinsic qualities described in this chapter are available for visitors to enjoy today, many of the regionally significant qualities are still being discovered, preserved, and interpreted for the public and are not shown. Nevertheless, we believe the following pages give the reader a true feeling of the depth and quality of the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway and the intriguing story those qualities tell.

The SBAC wanted to illustrate the intrinsic qualities of the Turquoise Trail visually, so that both stakeholders and visitors could “see” the richness of the byway. Descriptions of the intrinsic qualities are also included. The type and significance placed on each intrinsic quality is shown directly below most of the images.

#### 5.1 NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT QUALITIES

The Turquoise Trail has nationally significant qualities in four of the six intrinsic quality categories: archaeological, natural, recreational, and scenic. Some intrinsic quality categories have more than one asset with national significance. The Turquoise Trail may have nationally significant cultural and historic qualities, but they are not developed enough for public access, responsible preservation, or interpretation to place them in the national category.

#### 5.2 REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT QUALITIES

The Turquoise Trail has regionally significant qualities in all six intrinsic quality categories. Some intrinsic quality categories have more than one asset with regional significance.

#### 5.3 INTRINSIC QUALITY IMAGES AND TEXT

National qualities (archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic) are followed by the regional qualities. Some intrinsic qualities have more than one area of significance, such as having both natural and scenic significance.



## Sandia Cave

**(National Archaeological Quality)**

On January 20, 1961, the National Parks Service designated Sandia Cave a National Historic Landmark for its national significance as a paleoamerican site. The Park Service statement of significance reads: "Excavations here have yielded information on three distinct prehistoric groups. Situated in Cibola National Forest, the site represents one of the earliest known occupations of the Americas."

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Controversy surrounds the site. Is Sandia Cave the oldest site in North America where evidence of man's presence more than 25,000 years ago was found or is it a less significant finding where man was found less than 14,000 years ago? It depends on which professional's interpretation you believe.

In 1936, Wesley Bliss and Chester Stock found evidence of man's existence at Sandia Cave. Dr. Frank C. Hibben, the principle investigator of the site, later interpreted the evidence and concluded that it was older than that found at Folsom, making it at least 25,000 years old.

Armed with new methods, new technology, and decades of additional knowledge, other investigators later disputed Hibben's findings. In their abstract published by the Smithsonian Institution Press in 1986 after two decades of study, C. Vance Haynes, Jr. and George A. Agogino state, "We conclude that Sandia points are definitely less than 14,000 years old and suggest they may be specialized Clovis or Folsom artifacts used for mining ocher." In the Forward to that same publication, Dennis Stanford, Curator of the North American Archaeology, Smithsonian Institution said, "cultural questions remain very much enigmatic."

So what is the answer? When will the mystery be solved? No matter the result, the secrets of Sandia Cave continue to have a profound impact on the archaeological community. Sandia Cave is either very old or very, very, old.

An exhibit explaining the Sandia Cave controversy can be found at the Museum of Archaeology and Material Culture in Cedar Crest, NM.

# First strip mine in the United States

## **(National Archaeological Quality)**

The Cerrillos Hills contain an early North American strip mine and the oldest European mining district in the United States. Some believe the strip mine is the first in North America, although that fact is in dispute. The mine is currently on private property and access is restricted. The SBAC has determined that this asset is nationally significant, but until total access is provided to the public, we can only interpret the site. What is not in dispute is that many century old mines dot the region and the public can visit some of them in the Cerrillos Hills Historic Park.

## **(National Cultural Quality)**

There are no intrinsic qualities of national cultural quality available to the public at this time. Although there are actors, dancers, singers, professional sports figures, writers, artists, and musicians of national stature living along the byway, their privacy is respected by the local population--a major reason people choose to live in the region. There are several unique cultural and religious activities such as Fiestas and Matachinas, as well as, regional sports competitions such as hang gliding and the Santa Fe Century bike run held in May of each year. The SBAC believes it to be in the best interest of the stakeholders to preserve privacy rights, therefore, there are no known nationally significant cultural intrinsic qualities on the Turquoise Trail at this time. Please read in later portions of this chapter about the Regionally Significant Cultural Intrinsic Qualities.

## **(National Historic Quality)**

There are no intrinsic qualities of national historic significance available to the public at this time. The SBAC has determined that the Civilian Conservation Corps ruins are potentially a nationally significant historic intrinsic quality; however, until this asset is more developed for the public, the SBAC considers this historic intrinsic quality to be only regionally significant at this time. Please see the CCC description under Regionally Significant Historic Intrinsic Qualities section.

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# MADRID COAL

**(National Natural Quality)**

Madrid, New Mexico is the only known spot in the United States where veins of both bituminous (soft) and anthracite (hard) coal can be found. It may be the only place in the world too. Both types of coal were mined extensively from the same tunnel decades ago. The first coal mine was opened about 1859 to supply fuel to the steam boiler of the stamp mill just completed at the gold mining town of Real de Dolores, five miles to the southeast. Dolores also was the site of the first western gold rush in the 1820's. Madrid mines were the first anthracite mines west of the Appalachian Mountains. Coal production was limited, until the arrival of the railroad through Cerrillos in 1881. Several hundred tons of coal was transported each day by wagon to Cerrillos for shipment by rail. It was not until 1892, when the mines were consolidated under one company that a spur was built to Madrid from the main line and production increased.

Tailings from the now closed coal mines can easily be seen from the byway as you enter Madrid from the south. In Madrid, visitors can see a bit of history at the Old Coal Mining Museum located in the center of town.

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## The Great Unconformity

(National Natural Quality)

**The Sandia Mountains grew up as the Rio Grande Valley dropped.  
The granite base is topped with limestone.**

# Sandia Mountains Wilderness

## (National Natural and Scenic Qualities)

(Text courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service) The Sandia Mountains are an uplifted block formation formed about 62 million years ago. The base of the mountain lies at an elevation of 6,100 feet while the crest is 10,600 feet high. The top of the mountain is a limestone formation. The corresponding limestone layer lies 20,000 feet below the Rio Grande.

The Sandia Mountains are considered a "Sky Island", a diverse isolated ecosystem containing life zones from the Upper Sonoran Desert to Hudsonian mixed conifer based on elevation, surrounded by the lower elevation desert around the mountain.

The Sandia Mountains are the closest forested area for the 570,000 [ sic, approximately 650,000 in 2004] people living in the greater Albuquerque area. The Sandia Mountain lies within a one-hour commute of one-third the population of the state of New Mexico.

Sandia Mountain Wilderness was created in February 1978. In November 1978, 6,243 acres were added to the Sandia Mountain Wilderness when a land exchange was completed. In 1984 the final boundary modification of 20 acres was made which currently gives the Sandia Mountain Wilderness a total of 37,200 acres.

While the top of the mountain may be covered by as much as eight feet of snow, just a few miles away the lower western slopes are snow free. A recreationist may choose to mountain bike in the morning and cross-country ski in the afternoon. This gives the recreationists of central New Mexico a wide range of activities year round but does not allow the ecosystem a rest period from the people who love to use the mountain.

The Sandia Mountains have 155 miles of recreation trails with 111 miles within the Wilderness boundary. All but a few miles are open to equestrian use and one-third of the miles is available for mountain bike use. There are three handicap accessible loop trails on the mountain.

The Sandia Tram, splitting it into the north and south portions, bisects the Sandia Mountain Wilderness.

In 2003, Congress settled a land dispute between Sandia Pueblo and the U. S. Forest Service by passing a law that created a dual management system of certain portions of Cibola National Forest and the Sandia Mountain Wilderness Area. For more details, see the Field Guide to the Sandia Mountains edited by Robert Julyan and Mary Stuever published in 2005.

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### Flying above the clouds

#### **Sandia Peak Tramway (National Recreational Quality)**

Built in 1966, the Sandia Peak Tramway is the longest continuous jigback tram in the world with a length of 2.7 miles. A jigback is a tram that has a car going up, while another is coming down. The Sandia Peak Tramway has the third longest, 7,720 feet, clear span in the world. That alone would make a ride on the tram a world class activity. Yet, that is only the beginning. The tram is a significant transportation system bringing more than 275,000 people each year from Albuquerque to its 2 mile high destination on the Turquoise Trail. Most significant, the tramway passes through a corridor dividing the Sandia Wilderness Area. It is the only place in the United States where visitors are virtually surrounded by a nationally designated wilderness area. It is the only place in the nation that offers persons with disabilities an inside look at a wilderness area that they would probably never otherwise see.