

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 2.0

stands of piñon and juniper give this “belt” or life zone a distinctive individuality entirely different from that of any other place. It is often referred to as the Pygmy Forest. Grassland is the dominant vegetative type along with piñon, juniper, and occasional mountain mahogany. In the arroyo bottoms a shrub community of rabbit bush, oak, New Mexico olive, Apache plume, saltbush, wafer ash, and introduced Russian olive and salt cedar occur. Several significant permanent springs occur in the Cerrillos Hills which are focal points for a wealth of diverse plants and animals including some small valley cottonwoods and willows. As nearly all of these springs have been degraded by grazing and land use practices, protection and restoration of riparian areas will be critical to maintaining the ecological integrity of the area.

The area supports a diverse population of wildlife. Vertebrate animals inhabiting the Cerrillos Hills are those one might expect in hilly grassland and woodland in central New Mexico: at least twenty-five species of wild mammals (including bobcats, porcupine, coyote and mule deer), four species of bats, numerous rodents, reptiles and amphibians, as well as innumerable invertebrates. More than thirty species of birds have been identified including great horned owls and golden eagles.

While there has been no systematic inventory of the area, it is likely that the abandoned mines and natural habitats of the Cerrillos Hills are home to several rare bat species. Ten species of concern that are tracked by the New Mexico Natural Heritage Program are known to occur in Santa Fe County and all have the potential to exist in this area. In general, bat populations are declining because they are highly sensitive to habitat disturbances. Protection of the hills provides an important refuge for their future protection and study. In a natural area this large, it is also probable that a systematic biological survey would reveal additional rare, threatened or endangered species. As part of that survey goal, a biological study of bird species was completed a few years ago.

The park preserves county lands that connect critical resources and habitats and protect riparian areas and springs for wildlife access. This open space preserves unique geological features and scenic vistas along the historic National Scenic Byway known as the Turquoise Trail, serving as a backdrop for colorful vertical sandstone outcroppings known as the “Garden of the Gods.” This undeveloped area also relieves the county recharge/watershed areas from possible depletion of storage by domestic water use enabling sustainable population growth of both people and wildlife.

Archaeological & Cultural-Historic (text courtesy of the CHPC): The Cerrillos Hills, with its tricultural history, is an unusually important archaeological and cultural resource because of its significance in the history of the Southwest during the last thousand years. The Cerrillos Hills turquoise and lead mines played a central role in the commerce and economy of the prehistoric Indians of the Rio Grande Valley, and it is probable that the mines influenced the early Spanish explorations and settlement of New Mexico. The layers of lifeways in these hills, from pre-Columbian shrines and mining to Spanish and Anglo smelting, ranching, and commerce, give us our identity, define our cultural character, and constitute our heritage. To see the mines that were dug by prospectors a hundred years ago and the sites of their tents and the walls of their buildings is far more meaningful and memorable than simply reading about it in a book.

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Pottery sherds found in the Cerrillos Hills date the use of the mineral resources from AD 900, and the Hills are the source of much of the lead that was used for glaze paint by Rio Grande Pueblo potters between AD 1300 and 1700. Analysis of the sherds in the Cerrillos Hills indicated a large portion of them came from the nearby San Marcos Pueblo, which between the middle 1300s and the middle 1400s was the major center of pottery making in the upper Middle Rio Grande Valley. Archaeological sites present today and associated with the Puebloan mining activities in the Hills include turquoise pits, quarries, lead or galena mines, refining areas, workshops, hearths, campsites, and sherd areas. The Mina del Tiro, adjacent to the Park, is perhaps one of the most ancient lode mines in the New World. There are numerous sites on the Park lands that are registered with the Museum of New Mexico's Laboratory of Anthropology, including three prehistoric stone rings and a petroglyph at the summit of Grand Central Mountain.

The arrival of the Spanish with the Coronado entrada of 1540-41 certainly passed within a few miles of the Cerrillos Hills, but for whatever reason – the Indians of the Galisteo Basin had suffered recent depredations by Teya raiders from the Plains and were particularly wary of these newcomers, or possibly the mines at the time were temporarily closed down – the Puebloans were reluctant to disclose the location of the mines. Subsequent entradas in the 1580s and 1590s were successful in visiting the Cerrillos Hills and obtaining ore specimens for assay.

In the mid 1600s a cattle ranch was established south of the Santa Fe River near Alamo Creek and the nearby hills were given the name Los Cerrillos. In 1695 Governor De Vargas appointed a mayor for El Real de los Cerrillos which makes it the oldest Western mining settlement for which we have a clear record.

Soon after the Reconquista, about 1700, the Rio Grande potters ceased to make glaze-decorated pottery, and presumably the mining of lead ore by the Puebloans ceased at the same time. But Puebloan turquoise mining in the Cerrillos Hills continued into the twentieth century, with historical records showing inhabitants of Santo Domingo, Cochiti, San Felipe, and San Ildefonso all making use of the mines.

Spanish activities in the Cerrillos Hills during the first hundred years are poorly documented. Spanish mining laws were strict, so whatever mining was carried out by the Spanish colonists was probably done without the benefit of official sanction and concomitant records. It was only in 1970 that the archaeological evidence confirming 17th century Spanish mining and smelting in the Cerrillos Hills was discovered by George O. Bachman, USGS.

In 1879, the year the Cerrillos Mining District was formed, there was a mining boom, and in a very short time over 1,000 claims were registered. Many towns sprang up in the Cerrillos Hills area. At least one, Carbonateville, changed names three times before it was abandoned. It was first called Dimmick's Camp, then Carbonateville, and finally Turquoise City. Carbonateville's greatest claim to fame is that Governor Lew Wallace stayed in the Carbonateville Hotel while he was working on Ben Hur. The low stone wall ruins and the rutted stagecoach road of Carbonateville are on state land outside of the Park and are not accessible.

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The Village of Cerrillos was established in 1879 as a tent camp between the lead and silver of the Cerrillos Hills to the north and the coal and gold mines in the hills to the south. It flourished as a natural point of access to both areas, but it was the arrival of the railroad in 1880 that assured the fate of the Village of Cerrillos would be different than that of Carbonateville. Silver mining continued at Tom Payne through the early 1950's.

In the middle 1970s Occidental Minerals Corporation (Oxymin) pursued the creation of a large-scale acid-leach copper mine in the Cerrillos Hills but was unable to secure rights to sufficient water and the project was terminated. Community disapproval and the price of copper were also factors in this decision. Outside of, but adjacent to the Park, a discontinued ground quarry mining operation can be found on the same site as the January 1977 Oxymin underground test detonation.

Contact information: The Cerrillos Hills Park Coalition (CHPC) is an outstanding example of preservation on the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway, displaying the commitment of the area stakeholders to protect the region's intrinsic qualities. The SBAC believes, that act of "local" preservation, makes the Cerrillos Hills a regionally significant intrinsic quality, because it shows the commitment to sharing local resources with others. The following is an excerpt from the CHPC's vision statement.

"For visitors from elsewhere in New Mexico and beyond: in addition to the benefits to county residents, a place to study and understand some of the ancient and more recent mining history of the Southwest United States."

The CHPC mission statement:

"The Cerrillos Hills Park Coalition works to provide broad-based educational and recreational opportunities for Santa Fe County through the acquisition, preservation and protection of the Cerrillos Hills and the establishment, enhancement and support of a regional park providing low-impact public access to the unique natural, historical, archaeological, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hills."

For more information, the CHPC has set up a web site at www.cerrilloshills.org

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Kiwanis Cabin: Civilian Conservation Corps (Regional Historic Quality)

The SBAC has determined that the CCC ruins are potentially a nationally significant historic intrinsic quality; however, the only visible site access and interpretation is at the Kiwanis Cabin. Therefore, the SBAC considers this intrinsic quality to be only regionally significant at this time. The Kiwanis Cabin is located seven tenths of a mile from NM 536 Milepost 13.6 (Sandia Crest). There is adequate parking, a visitor's center, and an improved path to the site. The U.S. Forest Service provides interpretation via rangers at the visitor center and interpretive signs at the site.

In the span of eight years, from 1933 to 1941, 54,585 Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees in New Mexico built hundreds of roads and rails, 795 bridges, 472 lookout towers large dams and reservoirs, installed millions of rods of fences and planted millions of trees for reforestation and to prevent gully erosion.

When these New Mexico men joined the corps, along with 3.5 million other Americans, the country was in desperate straits. Close to 25 percent of the population was unemployed. Hunger and despair had become a way of life.

A group of local corps alumni want to see a memorial CCC museum of national stature built on the site where CCC Camp 814 F-8-N Sandia Park once stood on a piece of land just off NM 536, the Sandia Crest Road. They want people to know what they accomplished in youthful days during the Great Depression. And they want today's youth to know that youth are a major asset to this country, just as the CCC men were when they were boys. The CCC was the greatest-ever conservation effort in American history.



San Francisco Church in Golden

(Regional Historic Quality)

One of the most photographed buildings on the Turquoise Trail.

Golden: new gold placer deposits were discovered at the base of the San Pedro Mountains about 1839. Rich gold deposits referred to as old placers had been found in the Ortiz Mountains around 1822 and now the prospectors and miners with their dry washers were coming to the new strike in search of wealth. Soon the community of el real de San Francisco de Paola developed, along with the neighboring settlement of Tuerto to the north. The two villages and surrounding vicinity probably never contained more than a few hundred people and consisted almost entirely of Mexicans and Indians who lived in adobe dwellings and brought the crudely scraped ore on burros to the valley, where they used water to concentrate the gold.

Placering continued intermittently during the next forty years, interrupted by the Mexican War and the Civil War. About 1880, eastern capital and southwestern politicians formed several companies: the Canyon del Aguia and San Pedro Mining Company, Mammoth Mining Company, and the Gold Bullion Company to develop the new placer mines. Gradually, the town site known as el real de San Francisco de Paola had its name changed to Golden, which was its postal address and began to expand its services to the incoming population. By 1882, Golden consisted of three general merchandise stores, a hotel, and the Madden & Maxwell Saloon. Two years later the town had expanded to claim about 400 people.

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Covered wagon in Cerrillos (Regional Historic Quality)

The Cerrillos Hills abound in legends of turquoise, lead, and silver, of ancient workings at Mount Chalchihuitl, Bethsheba, and Mina-del-Tiro, and of days when enslaved Indians mined the wealth for the greedy Spaniards. No doubt it was stories such as these that induced two empty-handed miners from Leadville, Colorado, to rediscover the Cerrillos wealth and produce a boom. In 1879, Frank Demote and an Englishman named Robert Hart headed for Cerrillos to try their luck. When they returned to Leadville, with a collection of samples, word spread rapidly of their ore content, and the inevitable stampede resulted. The once unlucky miners from Leadville rushed to Cerrillos and formed a quick tent town. This was the beginning of the Village of Cerrillos or Los Cerrillos. By mid-summer of 1879, three hundred miners were at work gouging out the gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc from the Cerrillos Hills. Then coal was discovered in canyons along the Galisteo Creek, adding another important find to the rich treasures.

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Cerrillos charm

Mining is no longer important to Cerrillos, and today the town functions as a tourist attraction and as the gateway to the Cerrillos Hills Historic Park. It is a charming place, claiming a few businesses, St. Josephs Catholic Church, a health clinic, post office, riding stable, Cerrillos Turquoise Mining Museum, antique store, a local tavern, and several art galleries. As a community rich in history, Cerrillos has several properties on the historic register, including the Opera House and the mining district as a whole. While Cerrillos still looks like an old west ghost town with its dirt streets, it's home to many long time residents and families.

Cerrillos' charm captivated Walt Disney, who used the main street as background for his 1958 Elfego Baca television series. Cerrillos was disguised as the town of Frisco, as is verified by the signs still faintly visible on the buildings. A Hollywood favorite for movie productions, Cerrillos was the location for "Shoot Out" with Gregory Peck in 1971, "Outrageous Fortune" with Bette Midler and Shelly Long in 1987, and "Young Guns" in 1988 as well as other movies. A commemorative plaque for "Young Guns" can be seen on Main Street.

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Madrid Row House

(Regional Historic Quality)

The entire town of Madrid was designated a historic area on the National Historic Register on November 9, 1977. Its reference number is 77000928. Madrid produced both anthracite and bituminous coal, a unique and unusual condition, believed to be at only this location in the world. It was recorded that coal was taken from the Madrid fields as early as the 1850's. In 1891, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad purchased the Madrid fields to supply their steam engines, although they may have had a goal to diversify into other businesses. Madrid was incorporated in 1894.

Madrid reached its peak coal production in 1928, with its best years ranging from 1920 to the end of the 1940s. It was a company-owned town controlled by the Albuquerque and Cerrillos Coal Company and geared toward supplying all the needs of the employees. There was a six-room hospital, a doctor available at all times, a garage and service station, hotel, company store, schools and churches. Madrid had a fine baseball park with an electric scoreboard and a field lighted for night games, a tennis court, golf course, and a shooting range.