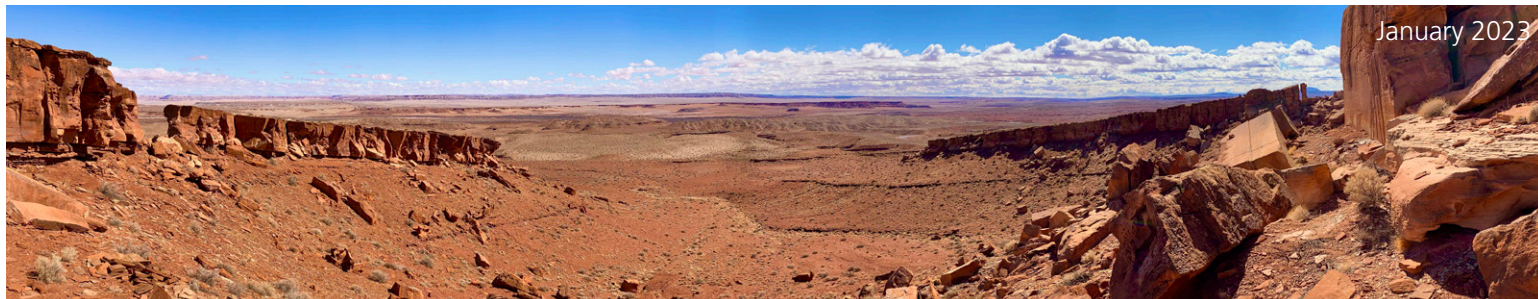


Wupatki National Monument

Arizona

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The National Park Service Would Like Your Input

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to share that Wupatki National Monument (Wupatki) has started a wilderness study. This study, which builds off the 2022 wilderness eligibility determination, will support the ongoing preservation of wilderness characteristics at Wupatki National Monument and complement the recently completed backcountry management plan.

The National Park Service would like your input on the acreage and boundaries established by the wilderness eligibility determination to further refine those boundaries based on the degree to which the lands reflect wilderness character.

The result of this study will develop an official proposal and recommendation for wilderness designation to the NPS director, the Department of the Interior, the president, and Congress.

The purpose of Wupatki National Monument is to preserve and protect thousands of archeological sites scattered across the stunning landscape of the Painted Desert and the grassland prairies, including several large, prominent pueblos atop fiery red sandstone and black volcanic flows.

The Wilderness Act and NPS Wilderness Policies

The National Park Service is guided by the [Wilderness Act of 1964](#) and policies – NPS [Management Policies 2006](#) and [Director's Order 41: Wilderness Stewardship](#), which direct how wilderness lands are managed and stewarded. The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the national wilderness preservation system for the “permanent good of the whole people . . .” The act further states that “a wilderness area is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions” and provides that wilderness areas “shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.”

Central to NPS wilderness stewardship is the preservation of wilderness character. Each wilderness area has a unique character, informed by both intangible and tangible qualities. Intangible qualities might include spiritual connections, cultural identity, sense of adventure, and artistic inspiration inherent to a particular wilderness area. Alongside the intangible qualities, wilderness character has five tangible qualities (based on specific wording in the Wilderness Act):

- **Untrammeled** – Wilderness is essentially free from the intentional actions of modern human control and manipulation.
- **Natural** – Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.
- **Undeveloped** – Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation.
- **Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation** – Wilderness provides opportunities for recreation in an environment that is relatively free from modern society, and for the experience of the benefits and inspiration derived from self-reliance, self-discovery, challenge, and freedom from societal obligations.
- **Other features of value** – Wilderness preserves other features that are of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.



Process for Designating Wilderness

Under NPS policies and associated guidance, all categories of wilderness—eligible, study, proposed, potential, and designated—are managed to emphasize the preservation of wilderness character. The process of designation requires cooperation and coordination from the public, monument specialists, the Department of the Interior leadership, the president, and Congress.

The table below shows major steps in the designation process, which can take many years to complete. For more information on wilderness in the National Park Service, please see <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/wilderness/index.htm>.

Status	Designation Process Steps
Completed in 2022	A national park system unit completes a wilderness eligibility assessment, and the NPS director publishes a determination of eligibility.
We are beginning this step	The National Park Service completes a wilderness study that identifies lands to propose for wilderness designation, subject to review and approval by the director.
Not started	The NPS director reviews the proposal and may send it to the secretary of the interior through the assistant secretary's office.
Not started	The secretary of the interior reviews the proposal and may recommend wilderness designation, forwarding the proposal to the president.
Not started	The president reviews the proposal and may recommend wilderness designation to Congress.
Not started	Congress may designate lands as wilderness or release lands from further wilderness consideration.

Wilderness Qualities at Wupatki National Monument

In 2017, Wupatki National Monument adopted a wilderness character narrative that describes the wilderness qualities that make the Wupatki eligible wilderness unique. The following bullets are adapted from the narrative.

- The Wupatki eligible wilderness preserves more than 34,000 acres of expansive dry and rugged high desert. The landscape is unique and tranquil and lends itself to reflection and reverence for both the human and natural history preserved within the monument.
- The archeological record illuminates an extensive history of intensive uses, and while there have been historic manipulations to natural processes in lands now considered wilderness, naturally functioning systems are still largely intact.
- Lands within the Wupatki eligible wilderness are the ancestral home and cultural origin of 13 tribes. To these tribes, Wupatki still holds immense cultural and spiritual significance. This continued cultural relevance of the Wupatki eligible wilderness adds value to wilderness character, helping us to better understand the context of this incredible cultural resource record and keeping the cultural landscape alive for generations to come.

Wupatki National Monument Wilderness Study

The National Park Service completed a wilderness eligibility assessment for Wupatki in 2012, which determined that approximately 34,194 acres (96.5% of the monument's total acreage) were eligible for wilderness designation, and approximately 1,230 acres (3.5% of the monument's total acreage) are not eligible. This wilderness eligibility assessment is a general evaluation of lands that possess wilderness characteristics for possible inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system. An eligibility determination based on the assessment was published in the Federal Register on July 26, 2022 (87 FR 44421). The eligible wilderness lands are subdivided into four areas based upon the character of the lands, as shown on the map below.

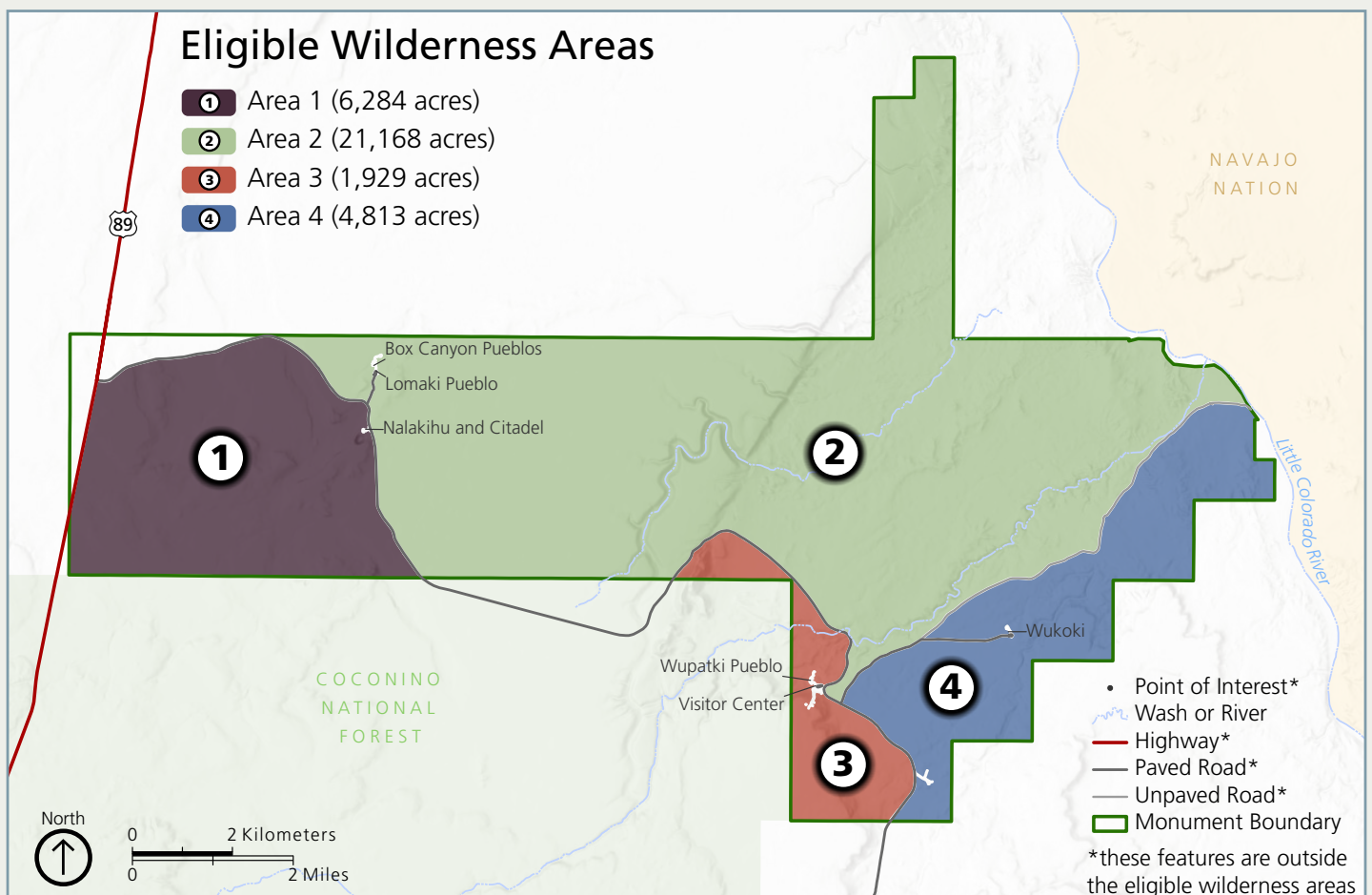
- Area 1 (6,284 acres) contains outstanding grassland resources with juniper savanna and prime habitat for pronghorn antelope.
- Area 2 (21,168 acres) is an undeveloped area primarily affected by natural forces and providing a variety of habitats. The Doney Monocline contains deeply incised washes.
- Area 3 (1,929 acres) surrounds the monument's primary interpretive feature, Wupatki Pueblo. This area also has some nonconforming uses.

- Area 4 (4,813 acres) contains outstanding Moenkopi sandstone outcrops, basalt mesas, and deep washes.

Some lands in the eligibility determination include current, ongoing, or potential future nonconforming or incompatible uses such as roads, facilities, other infrastructure, and areas that accommodate monument operations. The study may find that:

- Some or all lands would be identified as **Proposed Wilderness**.
- Some or all lands would be identified as **Proposed Potential Wilderness** (based on nonconforming uses that can be mitigated).
- Some or all lands originally identified as eligible would **retain their eligible status** and would continue to be managed in accordance with NPS wilderness stewardship policies
- Some or all lands originally identified as eligible would be determined to be **ineligible** and would be subject to management pursuant to the NPS Organic Act.

The results of the study could generate a proposal of a combination of the bullets above.



Eligible Wilderness at Wupatki National Monument per the Eligibility Assessment

How Will the Wilderness Study Affect Visitation and Management?

The wilderness study and any resulting wilderness proposal will not change current access to the backcountry as described in the 2022 Wupatki Backcountry Management Plan. The 2022 Wupatki Backcountry Management Plan provided for the protection and preservation of irreplaceable resources and wilderness character while establishing long-term direction for public access and experience of eligible wilderness. The Wupatki Backcountry Management Plan identified several new and continuing opportunities for guided and potential unguided access to wilderness, all of which were analyzed as they relate to wilderness qualities.

Management of cultural and natural resources would follow the Wupatki Backcountry Management Plan, building on an already robust monitoring and preservation program, ensuring the protection of Wupatki National Monument's many sensitive and nonrenewable resources. Since 2013, the lands included in the eligibility assessment have been managed so that all actions use the minimum requirement concept as required by NPS policy to have the smallest impact on wilderness character. This concept is derived from section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act (Prohibition of Certain Uses) and involves two general steps: step 1 determines whether the action is necessary; if action is necessary, step 2 provides guidance for determining the minimum activity.

Proposed Timeline for the Wilderness Study

Winter 2023: Initiate civic engagement

Spring – Fall 2023: Analyze potential boundaries for wilderness proposal

Winter 2024: Begin compliance via National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

Summer 2024: Begin public review and comment on draft wilderness study and NEPA document

Fall 2024: Complete wilderness study and send to NPS director

We Want to Hear from You!

Public engagement is an essential component of this study, and we welcome your feedback. Please consider the following questions when responding:

- What does the term “wilderness” mean to you, and how does it relate to Wupatki National Monument’s eligible wilderness?
- What information can you share about the qualities of wilderness in Wupatki National Monument that would help inform the study?
- Please share any additional comments you have about the wilderness study at Wupatki National Monument.

The comment period will be open from February 1 to March 2, 2023. Please send your ideas and comments in any of the following ways:

Online:

Visit the project website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/WUPAwild> and click the “Open for Comment” link.

Public Open House:

Attend our public open house on Thursday, February 9, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at:
Flagstaff Aquaplex
1702 N. Fourth Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86004