



Foundation Document Overview

Walnut Canyon National Monument

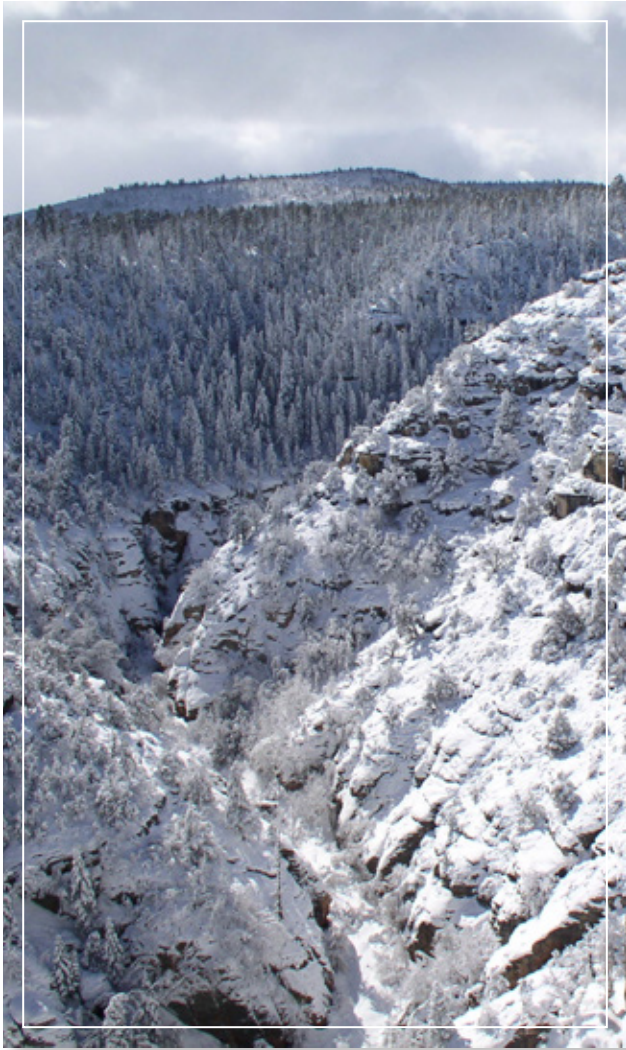
Arizona



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of WALNUT CANYON NATIONAL MONUMENT is to preserve and protect ancient Northern Sinagua cliff dwellings, pit houses, and other cultural resources found in the canyon's deeply incised and meandering topography. Perched on natural promontories and nestled in alcoves, these resources, of great ethnographic, scientific, and educational importance, provide public inspiration and enjoyment.

Significance

Significance statements express why Walnut Canyon National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **People in the Environment.** The Northern Sinagua adapted to varied environmental exposure created by the tight meanders of the canyon, alcoves, and the concentration of available resources and water.
- **Connections from Past to Present.** Natural and cultural resources within the monument are significant to a number of contemporary American Indian tribes as evidenced by oral history, archeological study, and continuing traditional practices. Today's visitors experience an intimate connection to communities of the past, both through traditional knowledge shared by contemporary tribes and by visiting ancestral homes in Walnut Canyon.
- **Biodiversity.** Walnut Canyon and its meandering topography and ecological communities overlap to form ecotones, bringing together plants and wildlife usually separated by elevation. This creates a rare compression of flora/fauna zones.



Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Archeological Resources.** Walnut Canyon National Monument preserves a unique expression of Northern Sinagua culture—cliff dwellings nestled in picturesque limestone alcoves. Other archeological resources include pit houses, free-standing pueblos, isolated field structures, forts (an archeological complex situated on a mesa top), quarries, agricultural fields, and petroglyphs.
- **Natural Landscape and Setting.** Walnut Canyon is a biological hot spot created by varying solar exposures, elevations, and seasonally abundant water. Several different ecological communities overlap within the canyon, mixing flora and fauna species usually separated by elevation and creating an environment where cacti can live alongside alpine Douglas-fir.

Walnut Canyon National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Historic Resources.** The historic structures and landscapes at Walnut Canyon include the 1904 Ranger Cabin, reflecting early US Forest Service (USFS) administration of the area, and structures and trail features from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Mission 66 eras of NPS management.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

The following unified interpretive themes have been identified for Flagstaff Area National Monuments:

- **The Human Experience and the Value of Heritage.**
- **The Continuum of Cultural Occupation and Ancestral Homelands.**
- **Landscape and Life: The Interplay of Human and Environmental History.**
- **Laboratories and Research Benchmarks.**
- **Geology within the San Francisco Volcanic Field.**
- **Climate Change.**

The following interpretive themes have been identified for Walnut Canyon National Monument:

- **Human Occupation.**
- **Ancestral Homelands and Cultural Traditions.**
- **Ecological Processes and Biodiversity.**
- **Geologic Processes.**
- **Habitat Preservation.**
- **Cultural Resource Preservation.**



Description

Walnut Canyon National Monument protects a dense concentration of exceptionally well-preserved prehistoric cliff dwellings just 10 miles from downtown Flagstaff, Arizona. Established by presidential proclamation in 1915, the monument contains more than 500 archeological sites along 10 miles of Walnut Creek. The deep pools and reliable flow of the creek made the canyon a rare and valuable home for the Northern Sinagua people and supports the rich biological communities of this dry landscape. Scattered families farmed the upland areas around Walnut Canyon for hundreds of years, growing small gardens of corn, squash, and beans. After the eruption of Sunset Crater Volcano in the 11th century, the population of the area grew significantly and people began constructing dwellings in the limestone alcoves below the canyon rim.

Stark variations in elevation and exposure in the canyon have created a unique biological hot spot where distinct ecological communities overlap and interact. Its location and orientation make it an important wildlife corridor, and even though the monument is relatively small, it provides habitat for numerous charismatic or rare wildlife species, such as mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, peregrine falcon, and Mexican spotted owl.

Dark night skies and low ambient sound levels contribute to the natural setting and biological diversity of Walnut Canyon. The monument contains a national register-listed cultural landscape, the Headquarters Area Historic District.

Walnut Canyon's ancient dwellings and rich assortment of plants and animals hold traditional cultural importance for numerous tribes in the Southwest. For the American Indian people whose ancestors occupied the canyon for approximately 150 years, these sites contain evidence and information that verifies oral histories and maintains cultural identities. Volcanic eruptions and other geologic processes, combined with ancient and modern human influences in the area, highlight the dynamic nature and interplay of social and environmental history. Aside from its value as a classroom for science and research, the monument represents an outstanding scenic and recreational attraction for visitors and local residents.

