

Agua Fria National Monument Proclamation

THE WHITE HOUSE Office of the Press Secretary (Grand Canyon, Arizona) For Immediate Release, January 11, 2000 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The windswept, grassy mesas and formidable canyons of Agua Fria National Monument embrace an extraordinary array of scientific and historic resources. The ancient ruins within the monument, with their breathtaking vistas and spectacular petroglyphs, provide a link to the past, offering insights into the lives of the peoples who once inhabited this part of the desert Southwest. The area's architectural features and artifacts are tangible objects that can help researchers reconstruct the human past. Such objects and, more importantly, the spatial relationships among them, provide outstanding opportunities for archeologists to study the way humans interacted with one another, neighboring groups, and with the environment that sustained them in prehistoric times.

The monument contains one of the most significant systems of late prehistoric sites in the American Southwest. Between A.D. 1250 and 1450, its pueblo communities were populated by up to several thousand people. During this time, many dwelling locations in the Southwest were abandoned and groups became aggregated in a relatively small number of densely populated areas. The monument encompasses one of the best examples of these areas, containing important archeological evidence that is crucial to understanding the cultural, social, and economic processes that accompanied this period of significant change.

At least 450 prehistoric sites are known to exist within the monument and there are likely many more. There are at least four major settlements within the area, including Pueblo La Plata, Pueblo Pato, the Baby Canyon Ruin group, and the Lousy Canyon group. These consist of clusters of stone-masonry pueblos, some containing at least 100 rooms. These settlements are typically situated at the edges of steep canyons, and offer a panorama of ruins, distinctive rock art panels, and visually spectacular settings.

Many intact petroglyph sites within the monument contain rock art symbols pecked into the surfaces of boulders and cliff faces. The sites range from single designs on boulders to cliffs covered with hundreds of geometric and abstract symbols. Some of the most impressive sites are associated with major pueblos, such as Pueblo Pato.

The monument holds an extraordinary record of prehistoric agricultural features, including extensive terraces bounded by lines of rocks and other types of landscape modifications. The agricultural areas, as well as other sites, reflect the skills of ancient residents at producing and obtaining food supplies sufficient to sustain a population of several thousand people.

The monument also contains historic sites representing early Anglo-American history through the 19th century, including remnants of Basque sheep camps, historic mining features, and military activities.