



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

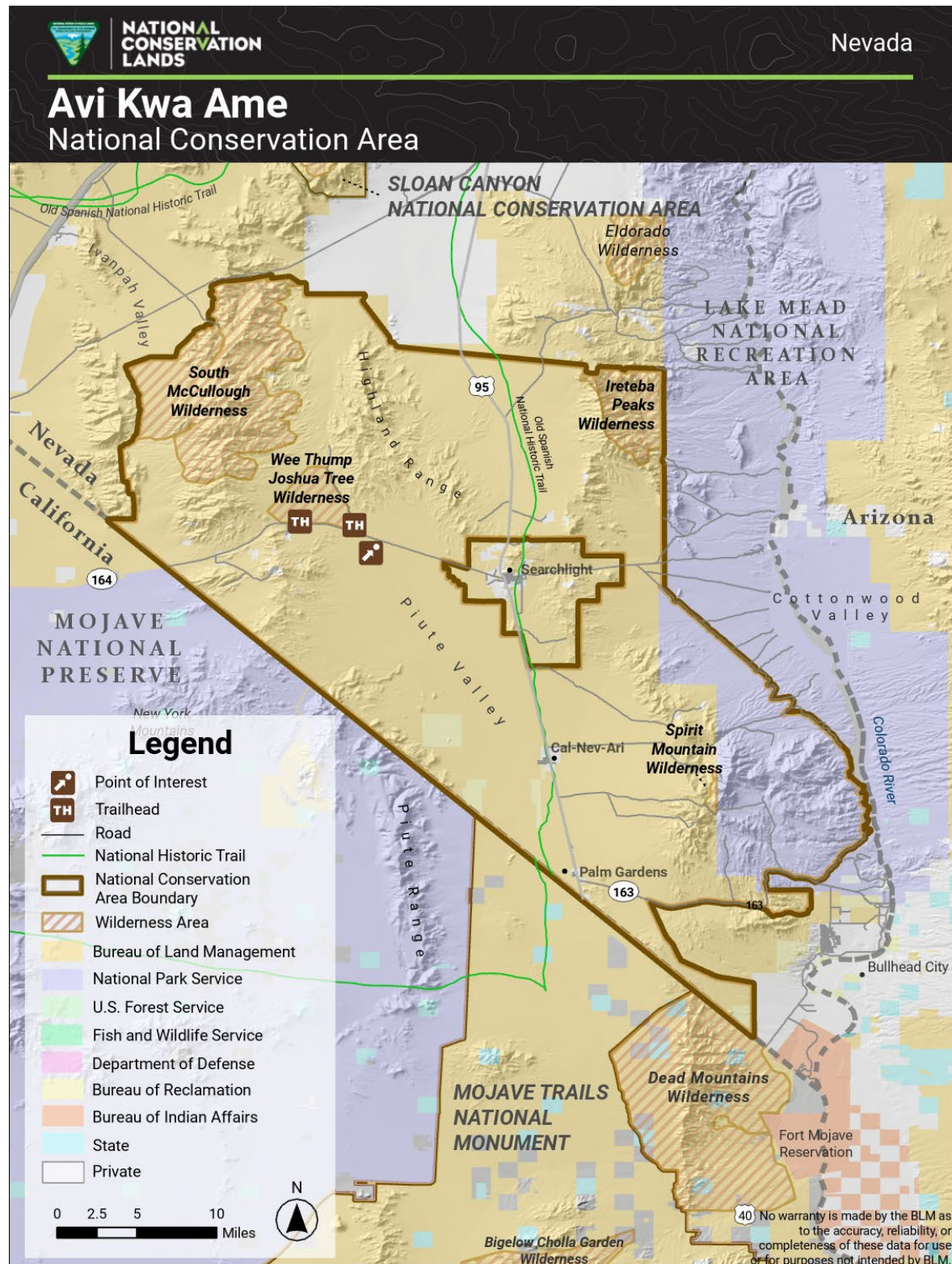
Nevada
2024: Annual Manager's Report

Avi Kwa Ame

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

New Monument, New Foundations

At the start of FY24, Avi Kwa Ame National Monument (AKANM) had only been in existence for a little over six months. As such a new National Monument, the first order of business was establishing a strong base to build upon in the coming years thus most accomplishments fall within overlapping goals focusing on building partnerships, co-stewardships, and infrastructure.

Building Infrastructure

As a National Monument designation often means increased visitor use and impacts on the land if not properly managed, AKANM began the process of proactively upgrading and protecting popular recreation spots and areas of cultural concern. Parking areas were delineated and bounded by the installation of posts to allow access for recreationists while protecting the characteristics of the natural landscape they enjoy.



Work also began to coordinate the protection of springs with Tribal Partners.

Building Relationships

Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) and the surrounding arid valleys and mountain ranges are among the most sacred places for Southern-Yuman and certain Numic-speaking Tribal Nations. These Tribal Nations have been here since time immemorial and



working with them was deemed essential to the mission. To accomplish this, an initial co-stewardship meeting was held in May of 2024 to establish goals, discuss methods, and chart a path toward creating a memorandum of understanding between BLM and interested Tribal Nations to set forth terms, pursuant to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, for co-stewardship of the Monument. Plans were established to have field visits with interested tribal partners to areas within the Monument to provide context for future decisions.

Challenges

Drought

Fiscal Year 2024 ended in a severe drought, starting with a summer where no monsoonal rains fell, leading to over 200 days without any measurable rainfall. Drought impacts the quality and quantity of the species present within AKANM, while sustained dry conditions can increase erosion, damaging sensitive cultural and historical sites. Drought can also increase the risk of wildfires.

Wildfire

On July 28, 2023, the York Fire originated on private land within the Mojave National Preserve and spread into Nevada and AKANM. The fire spread rapidly due to adverse weather conditions, with winds out of the south and southwest pushing the fire towards the Monument. Before being contained, the York Fire burned 93,078 acres, with 8,250 acres located in the Monument. Post-fire efforts will occur over the next five years, incorporating signage and barriers, increased



patrols, invasive weed monitoring and treatment, invasive annual grass control and Joshua Tree woodland restoration. These actions aim to allow rehabilitation efforts to take hold and reduce the spread of invasive plants such as cheatgrass, red brome and puncturevine.

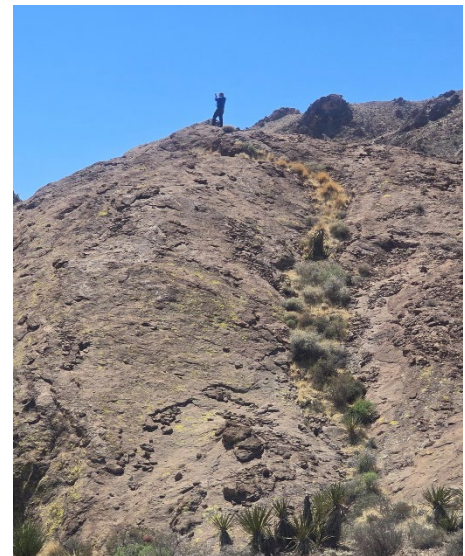
Invasive Weeds

Throughout AKANM, noxious and invasive weeds have been documented in disturbed areas, especially adjacent to the side of the road where overnight and temporary parking locations occur. Across the Mojave Desert, the increasing levels of invasive grasses have caused an increase in fire frequency. This is a departure from historic norms, as Joshua Trees and other desert-adapted plants have limited natural defenses or propagation techniques when fires occur around them.

Visitors

Visitation to the Monument in Fiscal Year 24 was estimated at 104,114 visitors, based on vehicle use data collected at dispersed sites and along common entrance routes. These estimates are especially rough as US 95 funnels recreationists from Las Vegas Valley directly onto numerous small roads, trails, and two-tracks exiting from the highway into the Monument. The southeast corner of AKANM touches upon a UTV Trail System with individuals casually crossing back and forth between Monument land and the trail system. The northern routes into the Monument co-exist with powerlines causing data errors in common electronic vehicle counters. Multiple communities are located entirely within AKANM, adding complexity to visitation monitoring.

Avi Kwa Ame National Monument lacks a singular visitation point where most visitors would coalesce and be easily counted. Instead, visitors take any number of routes to access the various mountain ranges and ecological niches within the 506,814-acre Monument, picking and choosing based on individual inclinations instead of a promoted top tourist destination for visitors. UTV riders visit individually or as part of organized groups during the weekends to explore the backcountry roads and trails throughout the Monument. Birders following the wide variety of birds that pass through AKANM end up at different areas of the Monument depending on the time of day, the season, and the weather needs that correspond to the birds they pursue. Hikers frequent during the colder months, while during summer, individuals often just drive through on their way to the Colorado River. Astronomy fans hit many of the same places as other recreationists, but at night, and based on phases of the moon. Individuals who live in the communities within the boundaries of AKANM can be found walking their dogs, riding bikes, and performing daily activities that cross them over from private onto public land.



Partnerships

Honor Avi Kwa Ame Campaign

The designation of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument was the result of years of campaigning by a coalition of tribes; residents of Searchlight, Henderson, Boulder City and Laughlin; conservation groups; recreationists; and others who wished to preserve the amazing wildlife habitat, important cultural resources, outstanding scenery, world-class recreational opportunities, plus other values of the lands within the Monument. As part of the campaign, every resident of Searchlight NV (which is now surrounded by the Monument) was visited by a few dedicated local coalition members to discuss every element and potential impact of the area being designated as a National Monument. This commitment to local buy-in helped build a foundation based on community involvement that continues to benefit the Monument.

Friends of Avi Kwa Ame (FAKA)

Many of the core members of the Honor Avi Kwa Ame Coalition went on to form the Friends of Avi Kwa Ame to continue caring for the newly designated National Monument. In FY24, FAKA brought in 338 volunteers, contributing 10,522 hours, with the board members alone contributing around half of the volunteer hours as they continued to work towards the betterment of the area. FAKA was actively involved in giving tours at Walking Box Ranch, organizing volunteer activities such as clean-ups and landscaping events, guiding hikes, helping with plant giveaways, developing outreach materials, building community connections, conservation/biological survey work, working with tribes, and route surveying.

FAKA members and the volunteers they recruited spent over 2,000 volunteer hours working at or in pursuit of improving Walking Box Ranch, a 160-acre ranch in Searchlight, Nevada, built by silent-era film stars Clara Bow and Rex Bell in 1931. After various owners, including a nearby gold mine, the BLM purchased the property in 2005. The release of a song about Clara Bow by a popular music artist in 2024 significantly expanded the age range of individuals interested in the life of Clara Bow herself. FAKA runs the monthly First Saturdays at WBR event organizing volunteer activities, providing tours of the ranch to give context to the history of the site, and bringing in a new speaker each month to present on a topic related or relevant to AKANM.



Science

Thrasher Studies

To complement and enhance previously collected data, the Great Basin Bird Observatory, in the summer of 2024, set out to collect new on-the-ground data on Bendire's Thrasher and LeConte's Thrasher. Both birds are on BLM Nevada's Special Status Species List and designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the Nevada State Wildlife Action Plan, Nevada Department of Wildlife. A goal of the still ongoing project is to help quantify the distribution and habitat use of desert thrashers within the Monument, as well as assess the effects of disturbance on density and nesting productivity. This information will provide land managers, both inside and outside the boundaries of AKANM, with invaluable information to minimize the impacts of development, roads, transmission lines, and other disturbances. The insights into potential restoration techniques and priority areas for Desert Thrashers will help inform management plans going forward.



Volcanology and the “Mush Hypothesis”

The Monument's geology received international interest when the Department of Earth Sciences at Durham University of the United Kingdom, proposed a project to test a hypothesis referred to as “mush hypothesis.” While magmatic reservoirs are commonly understood as massive cavities filled with magma, previous research has long suggested that they likely contain crystal mush, an ensemble of solid crystals and fluid (gas/melt) that reside in interstitial pore spaces. Plutonic bodies, such as the Searchlight Pluton, represent the solidified equivalents of mushy magma reservoirs that could have fed explosive volcanic eruptions. Because these rocks have cooled and solidified in situ, they now preserve valuable textural and spatial context that can tell us about the physical behavior of the crystal mush, which is key for interpreting magma reservoir structure and development and understanding the changes that might lead to volcanic eruptions. Though AKANM has no active volcanoes, this research places the area on the cutting edge of volcanology.

Outreach and Special Events

Families in Nature

In collaboration with Clark County Parks and Recreation and Get Outdoors Nevada, BLM hosted participants of the Families in Nature program, at Walking Box Ranch. Families in Nature provides opportunities to families of limited economic means to visit various natural areas and learn about the public lands as well as the natural environment. Participants were provided a guided tour of Walking Box Ranch and given an opportunity to learn about the Monument and its wildlife. As many families primarily only spoke a language other than English, translation services were provided by Avi Kwa Ame and Clark County staff. Approximately 40 participants were hosted for this event.



Plant Giveaway

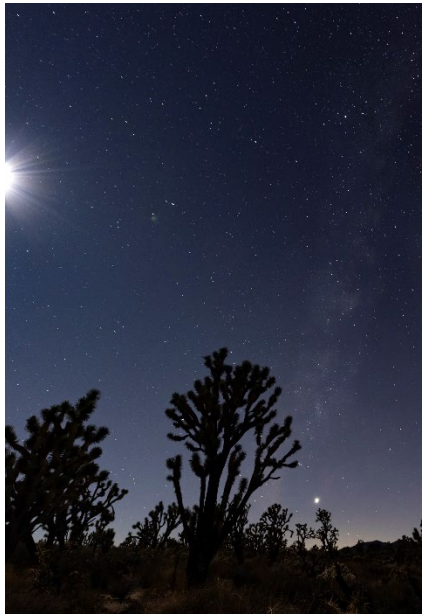
In collaboration with the Friends of Avi Kwa Ame and Equinox Gold Corp-Castle Mountain Venture, BLM hosted a plant giveaway event at Walking Box Ranch. Leftover native plants from the nearby mine's restoration project were offered to the public at no-cost. The event drew over 100 members of the public who came to adopt plants but were provided the opportunity to socialize with other members of the community; meet Monument staff, Friends' members, and local community leaders; learn about Avi Kwa Ame National Monument; and participate in a tour of the historic ranch.



Monument Anniversary

On April 13, 2024, BLM and Friends of Avi Kwa Ame celebrated Avi Kwa Ame National Monument's one-year anniversary. The public was invited to participate in celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Monument with BLM employees and FAKA members by participating in guided tours of the ranch house and grounds, volunteering in various projects, learning about the resources of the Monument, and taking a hike with experts in the wildlife and flora of the area. The day-long event drew hundreds of visitors, including community leaders. After the event at Walking Box concluded, BLM staff participated in additional events hosted by Searchlight, NV, which furthered the anniversary celebration and expanded community buy-in of AKANM.

The Monument After Hours



For eons work would cease when the sun vanished behind the horizon, replaced by darkness permeated with a sky full of celestial objects. The cycle of night and day humans had depended on since the dawn of creation to regulate themselves, disappeared in Las Vegas when the endless lights of Sin City banished darkness beyond its borders; a final removal of the night and its darkness which long had been the enemy of productivity. Yet in banishing the darkness, humanity robbed people of the celestial objects held within that had been their companions since humans first looked upon the night sky in wonder. The stories and lore that sprung from these seemingly eternal yet forever changing nightly visitors, which formed the basis of endless myths, art, literature, and music from cultures throughout time, lost meaning as the ancestral sky vanished from view.

For some visitors, an eternal day and the lit-up strip are novel experiences and part of the attraction of the Entertainment Capital of the World, but those who wish to experience the majesty of a night sky full of stars, must venture outside the skyglow of Las Vegas. Only an hour south of Las Vegas is Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, which can provide visitors with a glimpse of the night from time immemorial. The dark sky allows people to connect to the awe-inspiring majesty of the stars, planets, nebula, comets, and every other wonder waiting to be discovered beyond the limits of earth, all while providing a refuge for migratory birds and other animals that depend on dark skies for their continued health and existence.

To help preserve the dark skies, the Friends of Avi Kwa Ame and members of the Las Vegas Astronomical Society have begun working together with assistance from the BLM towards Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, becoming certified as a Dark Sky Park. The work will keep this piece of cultural history and beauty available for locals and visitors. In pursuit of this designation, volunteers have been diligent in taking light monitoring readings, holding astronomical events for the public and society members, meeting with local community leaders, and inventorying lighting infrastructure.



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

Avi Kwa Ame National Monument

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<https://www.blm.gov/avi-kwa-ame-national-monument>

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