

Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project

The Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project (MPPP) recognizes that the petroglyphs on Mesa Prieta offer an irreplaceable link to the past; the preservation of that history is critical to the area's quality of life. The Mission of MPPP: *The Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project promotes heritage stewardship and the preservation of archaeological features and the environmental and cultural landscape of the Mesa Prieta region of the northern Rio Grande Valley through documentation, education and public outreach.*

In the early 1990s, Katherine Wells purchased a 188 acre piece of petroglyph rich property near Lyden; a portion of that property, 156 acres, eventually was given to The Archaeological Conservancy in 2007 and became known as the **Wells Petroglyph Preserve**. In 2015, 25 more acres were added bringing the Preserve to 181 acres. The Preserve, the most concentrated area of petroglyphs on Mesa Prieta, is on the National Register of Historic Places, the State Register of Cultural Properties and listed as one of eleven most endangered landscapes in the United States by The Cultural Landscape Foundation in 2014.

In 1999, Katherine began organizing a project to survey and record all the petroglyphs on the mesa. For the next three years, maps were gathered, permission obtained to record on private land, volunteers trained, funds raised, recording forms developed and other related tasks accomplished. Petroglyph recording began in 2002 and since then, over 55,000 petroglyphs have been recorded. Recording the entire mesa will take many years and require untold thousands of volunteer hours.

Today, the MPPP Board of Directors of the non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization oversees all the activities of the Project including management of the Wells Petroglyph Preserve. Janet MacKenzie, a Canadian born archaeologist, is the MPPP Director. Janet has education and experience in project management and brings strong organizational skills to the project. She oversees all MPPP programs and activities such as archaeological recording, coordination of some 110 volunteers, grant applications and educational programs, including the Summer Youth Intern Program for Pueblo and Hispano youth as well as the 4th through 7th grade curriculum – "Discovering Mesa Prieta". Candie Borduin is MPPP Field Recording Coordinator and Trainer and Web Site Manager. Jennifer Goyette is MPPP Administration Assistant and is temporarily functioning as MPPP Tour and Docent Coordinator. MPPP hosts about 10 different committees including Education, Technical Processes, Public Relations – Outreach and Promotion, Fundraising, National Monument, Site Watch, Web Site and Library. About 110 volunteers work with the project in various capacities. Please contact Janet for more information about any of these committees.

PETROGLYPH RECORDING

In 2002, the first of several petroglyph recording training classes were presented at Mesa Prieta by Helen and Jay Crotty and Jean and Jerry Brody. Long established leaders in petroglyph recording, they are credited with establishing the Rio Grande Style Petroglyph Categorization System used to categorize rock images in New Mexico. MPPP affiliates with the Archaeological

Society of New Mexico (ASNM) Rock Art Council; forms and petroglyph recording techniques match those used in rest of the state. Recording volunteers are instructed in the use of GPS units and digital cameras, how to take measurements and compass readings, use of forms, drawing to document the images and the placement of each element into the categorical system. Volunteers are also introduced to the dynamics of working in teams, which enhances accuracy, as well as discussions in how to categorize the elements. Trainings are now offered annually in the spring based on need for new recording volunteer teams.

Much of the mesa is privately owned and obtaining owners' permission to document the images has presented challenges. When a land owner is approached for permission to record on their land, the Project is carefully and thoroughly described. All volunteers sign volunteer agreements agreeing not to disclose locational information, not to use photos taken for any publications, profit or social networks, not to bring guests, family members or dogs on the land or litter and in general, to be respectful of the land they are working on. The process of recording is described, including the entry of the data into a GIS database, then ultimately submitted to The Archaeological Records Management Section (ARMS) or archival storage and research. Each land owner receives a Land Owner report that includes archaeological information about the mesa, colored 8x10 photos of a number of featured petroglyph panels and copies of all documentation completed on their land with all the photographs taken placed on a DVD. In spite of these efforts, a number of landowners decline; some do not want strangers on their land and some are wary of records of information gathered on their land being placed in a government archive (ARMS). In the last several years, MPPP has been approached by a number of landowners requesting that the Project recorders document petroglyphs on their land, a significant and gratifying change from years gone by.

Approximately 80% of the rock images on the mesa are on private land, 20% on BLM, 181 acres on The Archaeological Conservancy land and Okay Owingeh a small amount. The largest parcel of private land on Mesa Prieta, 10,000 acres, belongs to Espanola businessman Richard Cook who gave MPPP permission to record petroglyphs late in 2008.

DATA MANAGEMENT

As field recording is completed, all data and photos undergo a quality check for **completeness, neatness and accuracy**. Photos are labeled with unique identifying numbers for the group, project, provenience, photo number and suffixes appropriate for the data base. Each photo is sized at about 300 dpi and saved as a .png file. Data are scanned and labeled in preparation for entry into the project's database. Completed data are stored in the MPPP office in Velarde in fire proof files; all data are saved on DVDs, computer databases and back up hard drives both on and off site. Data are entered into a Geographical Information System database (GIS) for use by researchers, students, archivists, etc. The database being used is compatible with other databases being used in the state. In 2015, the process began of uploading all data onto three national, geographically separated professionally staffed servers; MPPP is the first non-profit archaeological group in New Mexico to achieve this archival level. Petroglyph recording techniques and protocols meet the standards required by the New Mexico ARMS, the ultimate

repository for all the data. MPPP is a member of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico (ASNM) Rock Art Council which strives for consistency in all petroglyph recording in the state.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Because the ultimate goal of the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project is the preservation and protection of the rock images found there, those involved concluded that educational components were in order. Two youth educational programs have been developed by MPPP – the Summer Youth Internship Program for 14 to 18 year old youth and the 4th – 7th grade curriculum “Discovering Mesa Prieta” – both award winning programs. Please see information about these programs on the MPPP website at mesaprietapetroglyphs.org.

MPPP has developed a small resource library of books, periodicals and maps. Archaeology, anthropology, New Mexico history, Native American art and culture, the Southwest and related subjects are included. The library is available to teachers using the curriculum, MPPP volunteers, researchers and others as deemed appropriate. Ten months of the year on the last Tuesday of the month, Pláticas presentations are given for area residents and MPPP volunteers at Historic Los Luceros.

PROTECTION

Protection and preservation of Mesa Prieta is the founding theme of the entire project. Volunteers have a strong preservation ethic and share it with others they come in contact with through education, tours, etc. In 2007, Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project linked with New Mexico SiteWatch to start a site steward program on the Wells Petroglyph Preserve. Ten volunteer stewards, trained to observe for both natural and human made damage, monthly monitor assigned areas on the Wells Preserve.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Volunteer recruitment is an ongoing process and successful component to which considerable effort and care is given. The project is fortunate to have longstanding volunteers and is continuing to attract new people with commitment to the philosophy of preservation. Volunteers come from tour attendees, area residents, monthly Pláticas presentations, the professional community and avocational groups as well as by word of mouth by volunteers associated with the program and contact with similar groups. Volunteers contribute countless hours in petroglyph survey and recording, the school curriculum and summer youth intern programs, as tour docents, as MPPP Board Members, in the archival library, in database management and many other ways.

PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT WORK

MPPP has been fortunate to have the commitment of exemplary people—people who make the project work. The first is Katherine Wells who, after giving her land to The Archaeological Conservancy, continues to envision and work towards further endeavors to protect the mesa.

Some of New Mexico’s most knowledgeable archaeologists and rock image experts support the project. Starting with the Crotty and Brodys in the early 1990s in recording, mentoring and training, the project has a litany of professionals dedicated to the effort. Those who have been

most involved on the ground are Dr. Richard Ford, professor emeritus and former head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, now residing full time in Santa Fe; Paul Williams, Former Archaeologist for the Taos BLM district; Kurt Anschuetz, Santa Fe archaeologist whose specialty is ethnobotany, cultural landscape and water control systems and Martha Yates, a free-lance archaeologist.

The Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project is supported by generous contributions from individuals through annual and ongoing grants and carefully planned fund raising activities. Costs incurred by the project are for equipment; copying; archival storage; the Summer Youth Intern Program; the school curriculum; database consultation; paid staff including a full-time Project Director, a ¾ time Development and Communication person and a ¾ time Administrative Assistant; the project office and utilities; insurance; bookkeeping and other related expenses. It is the volunteers who ultimately make the project possible. In teams and individually, volunteers contribute thousands of hours and miles annually to the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project.

PUBLIC TOURS

Six public tours a year are offered on the Wells Petroglyph Preserve in addition to private, educational and special fundraising tours. An established docent program made of trained docents familiar with the preserve and history of the area lead all tours given on the Preserve. About 110 docent led tours are given annually on the Wells Petroglyph Preserve by over 20 docent volunteers.

PARTNERS

Over the duration of the Project, many treasured partnerships have been established with agencies, groups, individuals and others. Partners include the BLM based in Taos, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, Northern Rio Grande Heritage Area, Rio Arriba County, National Park Service, Santa Fe National Forest, Northern New Mexico College, Española Public Schools and other schools, The Archaeological Conservancy (owner of the Wells Petroglyph Preserve), ARMS, State Historic Preservation Office, New Mexico Historical Records Advisory Board, Archaeological Society of New Mexico and Rock Art Recording Program, ASNM Rock Art Council, Taos Archaeological Society and New Mexico SiteWatch. Last but not least, partnerships with private landowners have allowed the program to move forward with its mission of recording all the petroglyphs on the mesa.

AWARDS AND HONORS

The Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project has been recognized with numerous prestigious awards and honors:

1999—State Register of Cultural Properties designation to the Wells Petroglyph Preserve

1999—National Register of Historic Places designation to the Wells Petroglyph Preserve

2004—New Mexico Environmental Law Center Youth Environmental Hope Award

2004—New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance (Mesa Prieta was named one of the most endangered Sites in New Mexico)

2005—American Rock Art Research Association (Katherine Wells received the Conservation and Preservation Award)

2006—Santa Fe Community Foundation Piñon Award for Educational Service

2008—American Rock Art Research Association First Annual Education Award for the program “Discovering Mesa Prieta.”

2011 - Take Pride in America® National Award 2011: Outstanding Public – Private Partnership Category for the Summer Youth Intern Program

2011 - National Public Lands Day Volunteer of the Year Recipient: Dr. Richard Ford

2014 - New Mexico Historic Preservation Division - Cultural Properties Review - Heritage Preservation Award to the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project and Candie Borduin.

2014 - Archaeological Society of New Mexico Richard A. Bice Award Recipient: Katherine Wells for Archaeological Achievement.

2014 – Santa Fe New Mexican - One of Ten Who Make a Difference recipient: Katherine Wells.

2015 - New Mexico Historic Preservation Division - Cultural Properties Review – Archaeological Heritage Award to Janet MacKenzie.

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