

NEW MEXICO'S MOST ENDANGERED 2004

Every year, the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance announces its Most Endangered List based on nominations from around the state. A statewide committee reviews the nominations and those resources facing the most peril are placed on the list. The attention focused on the resource often results in increased efforts to save it.

Often, the Historic Preservation Division has worked to list Endangered resources on the State and National Registers and others have gone on to become Tax Credit projects or the recipient of HPD grants and loans. The Mesquite Historic District in Las Cruces, San Esteban del Ray, Fort Stanton and the Carrizozo Woman's Club all are such examples.

Here are this year's Most Endangered Places.



Motel Boulevard/Old U.S. Highway 80.

LORDSBURG, HIDALGO COUNTY. NOMINATED BY HIDALGO-BOOTH CENTENNIAL COUNCIL FOR HISTORIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

U.S. Highway 80 once was Lordsburg's main street, running through its commercial hub. It brought large numbers of travelers and visitors downtown; restaurants, filling stations, and motels lined the once busy highway. In the 1970s, Interstate 10 was constructed on the south side of Lordsburg, bypassing three miles of Motel Boulevard, stranding it from travelers. It has been on the decline ever since.

Aztec Ruins National Monument.

AZTEC, SAN JUAN COUNTY. NOMINATED BY ANNA M. CHAVEZ, AZTEC, NM.

Many of the structural ruins of this center of ancestral pueblo life date to the 12th and 13th centuries and were dedicated as a national monument in 1923. In 1987 it became a World Heritage Site. The ruins are associated with the peak of Chaco culture. Ancient Aztec today is embedded in a modern city that is growing over parts of the ancient city and to the very boundaries of the national monument. The ruins, graves, and cityscape of the unprotected area immediately adjacent to the monument, as well as the visual environment of the monument itself are threatened.



Marked and Unmarked Cemeteries Throughout New Mexico

NOMINATED BY GLENNA DEAN, STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST, HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION.

Ritual farewells to the dead are a distinctly human practice as is marking the landscape where they are laid to rest. These places are remembered by Native Americans as places where their ancestors lived, died, and are buried. In recent years the State Archaeologist has found herself "acting as a spokesperson for the dead—lots of them—entire cemeteries of them." Burials are robbed and damaged by individuals or destroyed by development. How can aboriginal burials continue to be disregarded at best—looted at worst—and even 20th century cemeteries be so conveniently "forgotten" and sold for development without at least moving the burials first, asks Archaeologist

Glenna Dean?



Mesa Prieta (Black Mesa).

RIO ARRIBA COUNTY. NOMINATED BY KATHERINE WELLS, VECINOS DEL RIO.

Mesa Prieta is 1000-foot-high escarpment located on the west side of the Rio Grande between San Juan Pueblo and Embudo. A large number of petroglyphs and other archaeological features indicate historic and prehistoric occupation of the area dating back 9,000 years. In the late prehistoric period, it is believed to have been a center of religious and ceremonial activity of the Tewa people. The petroglyphs exhibit diverse styles, methods of production, and a range of subject matter comparable to Petroglyph National Monument and the Galisteo Basin. Over the past decade, areas of the mesa rich in archaeological resources have been mined for gravel and stone. Petroglyphs have disappeared and their context destroyed. Grazing, vandalism and ill-considered development have damaged archaeological sites.



The Hoyle House

WHITE OAKS, LINCOLN COUNTY. NOMINATED BY LARUE WETZEL, WHITE OAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Hoyle House was built in 1892 in the wild gold-mining town of White Oaks. It featured hand-carved pine and redwood door and window frames, stained glass windows, and piped water. The front stairs are of hand-carved stone, and the house is a prominent part of the White Oaks Historic District, a National Register listing. The roof has begun to fail and caused minor interior damage. Without repairs, damage will escalate and ultimately cause structural failure.



Traditional Village of Agua Fria

SANTA FE COUNTY. NOMINATED BY TAMARA LICHTENSTEIN, SANTA FE.

Agua Fria is an unincorporated residential area adjacent to Santa Fe, and nearly surrounded by it. The Santa Fe River and the historic Camino Real run through Agua Fria. Although the village is virtually a part of Santa Fe, it has retained much of its rural character. Agua Fria is in the direct path of a large wave of development sweeping over southwest Santa Fe. It already has been damaged by inappropriate development, and a large urban infill project in the village has won county approval. Its designation as a Traditional Historic Community carries no protections with it.



Folsom Hotel, Folsom, Union County

NOMINATED BY BETTY A. GRIFFIN, BLACK FOREST, COLORADO.

This hand-hewn, stone, two-story building was built in 1888 and served the then-thriving town as a hotel, school, mercantile, residence, and town hall. It survived the flood of 1908. Today, it is listed on the National and State registers. The owners plan to live in the former hotel and use it as the artist's (Betty Griffin) studio. Although a new roof stopped years of water damage, not all of it has been repaired. An additional threat is posed by the heavy truck traffic on nearby Wall Street.



Lake Valley Ghost Town

SIERRA COUNTY. NOMINATED BY NEAL W. ACKERLY, SILVER CITY.

The abandoned mining town is located on New Mexico 27 between Hillsboro and Nutt. Scores of structures—homes, stores, liveries, and a railroad depot—went up overnight when a renowned cavern of nearly solid silver known as The Bridal Chamber was discovered in 1878. When the ore ran out, the town's folk slowly followed and many of its structures were stripped, the materials used elsewhere. Today, 12 structures stand in what was the heart of town. The buildings now belong to the federal government. Failure to stabilize and rehabilitate the already deteriorated buildings due a lack of funds will see them continue to decay and eventually disappear. Lake Valley is owned by the Bureau of Land Management and listed in the New Mexico Register of Historic Places.

St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church

JOHNSON MESA, COLFAX COUNTY. NOMINATED BY JUDY YOUNG, RATON.

Owned by a nonprofit corporation, the 107-year-old church is located on State Road 72 about 16 miles east of Raton. A National and State Register property, it was built by homesteaders at a time when the Johnson Mesa community flourished. Johnson Mesa Cemetery, with at least 54 grave sites, is across the road. Regular Sunday services were discontinued after 1943. After the mid 1950s, the church fell into serious disrepair and was in danger of collapse. Several campaigns to restore the building saved it, but its exterior walls are badly deteriorated.



Valle Vidal Unit

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST, COLFAX COUNTY. NOMINATED BY LESLIE BECK, ANGEL FIRE, AND TROY MURRAY, RATON.

The Valle Vidal is located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains north of Cimarron, and is the headwaters of the Rio Costilla in the Rio Grande watershed. The 100,000-acre unit was donated to the public in 1982 by Pennzoil as part of Carson National Forest. Boasting spectacular vistas, hiking trails, lakes, and grazing lands, the Valle Vidal supports 200 species of birds, 33 of reptiles and amphibians, 15 of fish, and 60 of mammals. The Ring Ranch, a large 1890s homestead, is listed in the National Register. El Paso Production wants to lease the natural gas rights beneath portions of Valle Vidal, and has offered to pay the \$2,000,000 cost of an environmental impact study. The forest is under pressure from the company and political leaders to fast track the project and permit the mining, which would scrape all vegetation from large swaths of land, possibly contaminating air, soil, and water with toxic materials.