

Natural Resource Condition Assessment for Fort Union National Monument: Abstract

Fort Union National Monument (FOUN) was congressionally authorized by Public Law 83-429 on June 28, 1954, “to preserve and protect, in the public interest, the historic Old Fort Union, situated in the county of Mora, State of New Mexico, and to provide adequate public access thereto...” The monument was formally established by the National Park Service on April 5, 1956. Additionally, under Public Law 100-35, the 100th United States Congress authorized the Santa Fe National Historic Trail on May 8, 1987 to commemorate the over 1,100 mile-long Santa Fe Trail from Old Franklin, Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The mission of FOUN is to preserve the ruins of the historic fort, provide for public access, and educate the public about its significant historical role in the American Southwest.

The National Park Service collaborated with Natural Heritage New Mexico, University of New Mexico Biology Department, to conduct a Natural Resource Condition Assessment (NRCA) of FOUN. NRCAs represent a relatively new approach to assessing and reporting on park resource conditions. They are meant to complement, but not replace, traditional issue- and threat-based resource assessments. NRCAs evaluate current conditions for a subset of natural resources and resource indicators in national parks.

This report includes condition analyses and reports on trends (as possible), critical data gaps, and general levels of confidence for study findings. The Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network and park staff helped identify indicators targeted for evaluation. Considerations in this process included the monument’s resource setting, status of park-level resource stewardship planning and science in identifying priority indicators for that park, and availability of useful data and qualified expertise to assess current conditions for each indicator included on a list of potential study indicators. We present background, analysis, and condition summaries for the 16 key resources. In each section, we discuss the key resources and their measures, stressors, and reference conditions. The report addresses the main threats to FOUN natural resources: climate change, exotic species, and human impacts/adjacent land use.