

“Discovering the Archaeology of the Arizona Strip”

by
Diana Hawks

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Diana described the Arizona Strip as the area located between the Utah State line and the Grand Canyon. In January 2000, President Bill Clinton created the Grand Canyon / Parashant National Monument consisting of over 1 million acres. This area is jointly managed by the BLM and the National Parks Service. In November 2000, President Clinton also created the Vermillion Cliffs National Monument which is managed by the BLM. In total, the BLM manages over 3.2 million acres of land on the Arizona Strip. Of that land, only 3% was inventoried for archaeological sites in 2001, 6% in 2008 and 7-8% in 2011.

The archaeology on the Arizona Strip goes back to 8000 – 12,000 BC to the Paleo-Indian time. This was confirmed when a Clovis Point was found in the Virgin River Gorge. There are a number of Archaic sites (8,000 – 1,000 BC), including in Paria Canyon. The Anasazi farmed this area from 1,000 BC to about 1300 AD. The Southern Paiute came onto the Arizona Strip beginning in about 1150 AD. Historic time on the Strip begins in 1776 with the Escalante expedition.

She said that 17 of the 35 Hopi clans trace their heritage to the Arizona Strip. The Hopi are direct descendants of the Anasazi people.

The Arizona Strip came into being in 1912 when Arizona obtained statehood. It was part of the Arizona territory and in 1911, the Arizona politicians questioned if Arizona wanted the area. One state legislator, a woman, visited the area and reported back “You want it!” and the rest is history.

Diana said that there are currently 20 public use sites on the Arizona Strip including Little Black Mountain and Nampaweap in the St. George area.

Diana went on to talk a great deal about the Vermillion Cliffs area, showing wonderful photos of the scenery and of some of the rock art.

Diana detailed a number of opportunities for volunteering on the Arizona Strip. These include:

Kaibab – Vermillion Cliffs Heritage Alliance -

<http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/kane/kaibab-vermilion-cliffs.php>. The KCVHA is chartered with preserving, protecting and interpreting the cultural resources of the Arizona Strip. This organization provides volunteer opportunities in the spring and fall, as well as events during March which is Archaeology Month on the Strip.

Grand Canyon Trust - <http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/kane/kvcha-field-school.php> operates a field school as well as many other activities.

Old Spanish Trail Association - <http://www.oldspanishtrail.org/> is working to locate the exact routes taken by the early Spanish as they moved through Utah and the Arizona Strip.

Arizona Site Steward Program was started in 1986 and currently has over 75 members dedicated to helping preserve the archaeological sites in the Arizona Strip.

John Mangels

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