

Request for Letters of Interest: Chaco Culture National Historical Park Administrative History

Title: Chaco Culture National Historical Park Administrative History

Budget: \$23,000.00 for Component A, with an additional \$9,320.00 allotted for travel and \$1,000.00 for supplies related to the production of oral histories. Funding for Component B will be pursued in subsequent years.

Deadline for Letter of Interest to NCPH: September 22, 2025

Expected Date to Award Project: October 10, 2025

Anticipated Start Date: October 20, 2025

Timeline for Completion of Component A: October 30, 2027

(If funding is secured in subsequent years, the Project Historian will have rights of first refusal to continue their work for four additional years. See end of document for a proposed breakdown of Component B if future budgets allow.)

Questions? Email ncph@iu.edu

Project Objective

The aim of this project is to complete Chaco Culture National Historical Park's (CHCU or park) administrative history. Chaco Canyon National Monument was established by President Theodore Roosevelt on March 11, 1907. It was initially managed by the Government Land Office before transferring to the National Park Service in 1916. On December 19, 1980, Congress redesignated the site as Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Seven years later, the park was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2013, the NPS moved Chaco under co-management with a second park unit. The park has never had an administrative history completed, despite its long history as a federally managed site. The project is to be funded in two parts (referred to as Component A and Component B throughout). If Component B funding is not awarded in subsequent years the project will be considered complete upon delivery of Component A requirements.

Component A: Oral Histories and Preliminary Outline and Bibliography

The project historian will begin secondary source research, identifying key primary repositories and sources, and identifying narrators for oral histories. They will conduct and transcribe a minimum of 5 and up to 15 oral history interviews with former and current park staff, stakeholders, and tribal members. The project historian will deliver a preliminary outline and bibliography for the administrative history.

Project Background

Chaco Culture National Historical Park is located in northwestern New Mexico, about 150 miles northwest of Albuquerque. The park was first established as a national monument by presidential proclamation in 1907. It was later expanded and designated Chaco Cultural National Historical Park in 1980 to recognize the interconnections between the park and its 50,000-square-mile area of influence. In recognition of its unique archeological resources, Chaco Culture National Historical Park was named a United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1987. (Foundation Document, 2015)

The park extends over 34,000 acres and contains some 4,000 recorded archeological sites. The Chacoan people combined many elements (preplanned architectural designs, astronomical alignments, geometry, landscaping) and engineering to create an ancient urban center of spectacular public architecture—one that still awes and inspires us a thousand years later. From the 9th to the 13th centuries, Chaco Culture was the center of a civilization of social, political, and architectural sophistication. An engineered system of roads and evidence of a vast trading network are indicators of its former inhabitants' relationship with the broader area of influence. (Foundation Document, 2015)

Euro-American documentation of the site began in the middle nineteenth century and captured the attention of archeologists in the early twentieth century. President Theodore Roosevelt created Chaco Canyon National Monument in 1907 through the 1906 Antiquities Act, which was established to protect archeological sites. The Government Land Office administered the site until the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, which continues to manage the site today.

Despite its long and important history, CHCU has never had an administrative history completed. There have been two summaries focused on the history of archeological investigations at Chaco: one by Lloyd Pierson in 1950, and one in 1982 by Mary Muraco summarizing the work of the Chaco Project, a multidisciplinary research program of archeological survey and excavation from 1970 to 1985. There have been previous efforts to complete an administrative history, but they were not finished.

Below is a preliminary list of topics and research questions. These topics should be considered throughout the administrative history, and it is expected that the project historian will develop their own, based on their review of the source material and completion of the oral history interviews. At a minimum, the product should cover movements leading to park establishment, legislative changes, key challenges of administration, land acquisition and status, and other significant developments beyond administration in the strict sense. The ultimate goal is to obtain an accurate, thorough, and well-written account and synthesis of the origin and evolution of the park as a unit of the national park system.

Topics:

- **Authorization and Establishment:** Why did Chaco Canyon National Monument receive protection so early under the Antiquities Act? How was public support for protecting Chaco created? What were the impacts of early establishment under Government Land Office administration and what changes occurred after the transfer to the National Park Service in 1916? What was the impetus and support for boundary expansion into Chaco Culture National Historical Park in 1980? What was the motivation and intent for establishment of the Chaco Protection Sites and how were they managed?
- **Land Acquisition and Inholdings:** How was the land acquired for the original monument from the patchwork of owners including the railroad, the University of New Mexico's "school" sections under the Morrill Act, Richard Wetherill's claims under the 1864 Homestead Act, and Navajo land claims? How did the removal of Navajo residents occur and what was its impact, short- and long-term? How did park administration navigate the multitude of inholdings? How was the land acquired for the 1980 boundary expansion? What boundary changes and issues have occurred in either the main unit or the non-contiguous units? How does the park's past land acquisition impact relationships with neighbors to this day?
- **Administration:** Who were the key staff members in the first 113 years? How did staffing levels, organization and demographics change? How did funding change? When did the park begin

charging entrance fees? How did park administration respond to energy restrictions, sequestration, and lapses in appropriations?

- **Built Environment:** How has the infrastructure of Chaco been built, managed and changed over time? How has transportation in, through, and out of Chaco in route and method? What decisions have been made on the development of access to the park and within it? What impact has the NPS placement of physical boundary barriers (e.g. fences) played in neighbor relations and local livestock management? What efforts have been made over time to control or manage various hydrologic and geologic processes and what were the impacts of those efforts?
- **Partnerships:** What roles have partnerships played in the development and interpretation of the park? What work did the friends group and the park collaborate on? What contributions to resource stewardship were made by park partners? How has the nature of these partnerships changed over time?
- **Visitation and Interpretation:** What efforts have been made at formal and informal communication, education, interpretation and publicity around the various values and resources of the park? How has the ongoing scientific research been integrated into stories of the park? How have visitation patterns and demographics changed over time? What has been the influence of external groups on educational programs provided? What kind of commercial use and special use permits have been authorized with the park over time? What impact has the closure of specific sites or limitations on visitation of sites had on visitors and interpretation?
- **Natural Resources:** What have been the priorities for Natural Resource research and stewardship at Chaco over time? How was the park impacted by the 1990s' Natural Resource Challenge initiatives? How have relationships between the park and the Inventory and Monitoring Network and the Exotic Plant Management Team changed over time? What were the effects of Chaco's application to be an International Dark Sky Park in 2013? How has the Natural Resources Program changed over the years at such a prominent cultural resource-associated park?
- **Archeology:** What trends in archeological research and management are demonstrated at Chaco? How has research at Chaco impacted Southwestern Archeology and beyond? How have relationships between the Chaco Archeology Program and regional/servicewide archeology programs changed over time? How has UNESCO World Heritage Site designation impacted perceptions of and research about Chaco's archeological sites? How did the administration of and work of the Chaco Project impact park management decisions and operations? What was the relationship between the park and the Chaco Project staff? How did the closure of the Chaco Center/end of the Chaco Project impact park research?
- **Historic Preservation:** What has been the role of the park in the development of historic preservation principles and practices for NPS, the Southwest, and beyond? How did programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps, Site Watch, and Vanishing Treasures impact Chaco? What are lessons learned from the decades of work around stabilization of the ancestral structures? What types of resources have not been preserved and why? How has the park completed compliance with environmental laws (National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act) and how have those strategies changed since passage of the legislation? What challenges has the historic preservation program faced and how have those challenges been addressed?

- **Curation of Museum Collections:** What are the origins of the curation program and how has curation of the museum collection (objects and archives) changed from the early Antiquities Act permits through the present? What legal issues and challenges have arisen regarding park collections? What role did CHCU play in early NPS NAGPRA compliance? Where have the collections been stored since the creation of the collection? What role did the park play in the creation of the UNM Hibben Center for Archeological Research and what has that partnership changed over time? What is the relationship between the park's museum/archives program and other repositories of materials from Chaco?
- **Relationship with Tribes and Pueblos:** What was the initial reaction by the associated Tribes and Pueblos to the park's establishment in 1907? How has the park's relationship with the neighboring Navajo residents and the Navajo Nation changed over time? At what point did a relationship between the park management and the Pueblos develop, and what has that looked like over time? What role did the Tribes and Pueblos play in the creation of the Chaco Protection Sites and the management of those sites since their establishment? How did the park's consultation efforts begin and how have those activities evolved over time? What have been some of the major issues addressed through consultation (e.g. NAGPRA repatriation and visitor exhibit planning) and what have been some of the key processes and outcomes?
- **Relationship with other Parks and Federal Agencies:** What has been the relationship between the park and other parks with a Chacoan or Ancestral Puebloan focus, particularly Aztec Ruins NM and Mesa Verde NP? How has CHCU collaborated with neighboring BLM offices regarding Chacoan sites and features on their land? What has been the impact of federal permits for extractive industries (i.e. oil and gas) on surrounding lands and inholdings? How have all these relationships changed over time?
- **Visitor Safety and Resource Protection:** How has NPS efforts to protect resources and visitors at CHCU changed over the park's existence? What technological, cultural or other forces have posed particular challenges? What are some key issues or events that have challenged the balance to manage visitor experience with resource protection (e.g. Harmonic Convergence)?

Research Resources:

The most important primary sources for the administrative history will be:

- CHCU Superintendent's monthly, quarterly, and annual reports;
- CHCU central and project files, including official reports, correspondence and studies;
- Oral history interviews conducted with former staff and stakeholders;
- NPS reports and correspondence in park and regional office files;
- Newspaper clippings;
- Records of affiliated and traditionally associated Pueblos and Tribes;
- Personal Paper and Manuscript collections of individuals with important activities or connection to park administration or issues (e.g. Edgar Lee Hewett papers at Museum of New Mexico).

The NPS has already identified several collections and repositories to facilitate this study. The listing below is not comprehensive and is not intended to limit the project historian to only those repositories. In fact, the project historian should identify other collections and repositories with additional relevant material. However, it is expected that most of the research will occur at the NPS Chaco-Aztec Museum & Archives Facility located on the University of New Mexico campus in

Albuquerque, NM.

- National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO;
- National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD;
- NPS Technical Information Center, Lakewood, CO;
- NPS History Collection, Harpers Ferry, WV;
- NPS Western Archeological and Conservation Center, Tucson, AZ;
- Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico Libraries, Albuquerque, NM;
- Maxwell Museum Archives, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

As noted above, this list is preliminary. The project historian is expected to identify other repositories which hold appropriate materials relevant to this study. Some institutions may have material online which could limit the need to travel to those repositories. As part of the project historian's research access to both public and restricted sites within parks may be necessary.

Materials Collected and Created:

All material collected and created as part of the project will be archived as project records. Such material includes oral history recordings and transcripts, documents, photographs, maps, drawings, notecards, etc., in analog or digital format. Born digital materials produced by the project should be created in a format that is approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as a current preferred file format (see NARA for guidance). Complete and accurate metadata must also adhere to NARA standards for all materials. The project team may publish reports or other products based on the research conducted under this agreement, provided the NPS is acknowledged, and no sensitive information is shared.

Explanation of Deliverables

Oral Histories, Tribal Engagement Plan, and Preliminary Outline and Bibliography

The project historian will work with the tribal engagement specialist in the [development of the tribal engagement plan](#), and once finalized, ensure appropriate implementation of the plan throughout the course of the project, including how and when the tribes and Pueblos would like to be engaged. The administrative history project team will work with this specialist to ensure that tribal and pueblo members are engaged in a meaningful way.

The project historian will conduct and transcribe a minimum of 5 and up to 15 oral history interviews. The project historian will work with CHCU staff, Agreements Technical Representative (ATR), and project tribal engagement specialist to develop a list of people to be interviewed for the project. The interviews should be conducted according to best practices outlined by the Oral History Association. In person interviews are preferred, but remote interviews may also be acceptable due to extenuating circumstances. Audio recordings should be produced in uncompressed WAV format (minimum 24 bit, 96 khz, stereo). Each interview should be transcribed according to the park provided style guide and transcript template and then reviewed by the narrator. Narrator edits should be incorporated into a final transcript. Each narrator will need to sign an NPS Interview Release Form. All release forms, audio files, transcripts, and notes will be transmitted to the park at the conclusion of Component A of the project.

Finally, the project historian will undertake secondary source research and preliminary archival investigations. This research combined with the oral histories will be the foundation for a detailed outline of the administrative history along with a preliminary bibliography.

The Component A work will be reviewed in iterations (see schedule below). The project historian will submit one (1) electronic copy of each iteration to the Agreements Technical Representative (ATR) for review. The draft will be prepared using Microsoft Word 2010 or higher.

Drafts requiring extensive proofreading or lacking the minimum content required by this Statement of Work will be returned to the Recipient as unacceptable. Revised draft reports may be required if substantial revisions are required and project schedule negotiated accordingly. The NPS will provide written comments on the drafts within 45 days of receipt. The second full draft will be reviewed by a historian outside the NPS, coordinated by the Recipient.

The project historian will deliver the final version of Component A deliverables to the NPS as an electronic file or files in both Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF.

Project Records

Paper and digital project documents will be accepted, but not duplicate materials. Format-neutral records created by this project to include official correspondence will be arranged in chronological order labeled with physical and digital file folder names. Born-digital images should be captured in TIFF format and individual images labeled. Born-digital textual documents are preferred in PDF/A file format but JPEG file format is acceptable.

Transfer of Knowledge

With input from the National Park Service, the project historian will develop a public product to disseminate information from the project. Examples include a public presentation, a series of web essays, or a published academic article.

Suggested Schedule of Deliverables

Below is a suggested timeline for delivery of the required products, which may change due to external factors such as natural disasters or lapses in appropriations.

This timeline is also negotiable depending on the needs of the selected project team. The project team may submit a proposed amended timeline with your letter of interest, and changes to the suggested schedule below will be approved by NPS.

PRODUCT	DETAILED DESCRIPTION	DUE	PAYMENT
Kick-off meeting	Initial meeting (or series of meetings) with NPS and NCPH staff.	October 20, 2025	10% (\$2,300.00) upon completion of meeting
Component A			

Tribal Engagement Meeting	The project historian will work with the tribal engagement specialist in the development of the tribal engagement plan, and once finalized, will work to implement and adhere to the plan throughout the course of the project, including how and when the tribes and Pueblos would like to be engaged. The administrative history project team will work with this specialist to ensure that tribal and pueblo members are engaged in a meaningful way.	January - August 2026	10% (\$2,300.00) upon completion of meeting
Review Draft Tribal Engagement Plan	The project historian will review the draft plan submitted by the tribal engagement specialist. <i>NPS review period: 45 days</i>	March 15, 2026	10% (\$2,300.00) by May 1, 2026
Proposed List of Oral History Narrators	The project historian will work with CHCU staff, Agreements Technical Representative (ATR), and project tribal engagement specialist to develop a list of people to be interviewed for the project. <i>NPS review period: 45 days</i>	May 15, 2026	10% (\$2,300.00) by July 1, 2026
Sample Oral History Transcript	The project historian will submit one sample oral history transcript for NPS approval before proceeding with the remaining interviews. <i>NPS review period: 45 days</i>	July 15, 2026	10% (\$2,300.00) by September 1, 2026
Implementation of Tribal Engagement Plan	The project historian will work with the tribal engagement specialist to implement the final engagement plan and meet with NCPH and NPS to update on the plan implementation.	By October 15, 2026	10% (\$2,300.00) upon completion
Oral Histories and Transcripts	The project historian will complete between 5-15 audio interviews with former and current park staff and key stakeholders. The interviews should be conducted according to best practices outlined by the Oral History Association.	October 15, 2027	20% (\$4,600.00) by December 1, 2027
Preliminary Outline and Bibliography	The project historian will undertake secondary source research and preliminary archival investigations. This research, combined with the oral histories, will be the foundation for a	October 15, 2027	20% (\$4,600.00) by December 1, 2027

	detailed outline of the administrative history along with a preliminary bibliography to set up Component B of the project.		
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Personnel Qualifications

1. The Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects of managing the proposed study. The PI must have a PhD, MA, or equivalent in United States History (no exceptions). A level of experience equivalent to a PhD is acceptable and may be evidenced by a publication record demonstrating a professional level of research, analysis, and report preparation. It is expected that the publication record will reflect an understanding and ability to apply research methodology, and education and experience beyond that of a project historian. For this project we are looking for a PI with a PhD, *or* an MA with relevant experience doing long-term research and preparing monograph-length works using primary and secondary sources.

2. Project Historian(s)

Although the overall research design, guidance, and responsibility for the completed study lies with the Principal Investigator, the PI may utilize the assistance of project historians (PH) and other project staff at their discretion to accomplish the research. The minimum requirements for a PH are a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in United States History from an accredited college or university. A Master's thesis in history or its equivalent in research and publication are highly recommended.

3. Standards for consultants

Personnel hired or subcontracted for their special knowledge and expertise must carry academic and/or experiential qualifications in their particular area of expertise. Such qualifications are to be documented by means of vitae attachments when the proposal is prepared and submitted.

Stipulations

- The principal investigator must be fully qualified personnel according to the Secretary of the Interior's standards for professional historians, outlined in [NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guidelines, Appendix E](#).
- All material collected and created as part of the project will remain the property of the Federal Government. Such material includes oral history recordings and transcripts, documents, photographs, maps, microfilm, drawing, notecards, computer files, etc.
- All reports and material collected resulting from the study will become the property of the United States Government. The project historian may publish reports or other products based on the research conducted under this agreement, provided the NPS role is acknowledged and no sensitive information is shared.

Submitting Your Letter of Interest

Your letter of interest be emailed to ncph@iu.edu by September 22, 2025. It should come in the form of a single PDF attached to the email, and should include:

1. a full C/V for the PI (or for each member of the proposed project team, if multiple researchers will be involved);
2. a one-page proposal letting us know why you'd be the right fit for this project. Please include an explanation of your approach to the project;
3. a professional writing sample of at least 4,000-5,000 words, demonstrating original research and use of secondary source citations;
4. a proposed line-item budget for Component A's project budget that includes:
 - . Personnel services including PI and other personnel
 - . Miscellaneous personal expenses
 - . Supplies and equipment
 - . Travel
 - . Overhead, Indirect, and In-kind costs if applicable
 - . Other expenses
 - . Total project cost
2. any suggested changes to the schedule of work found above, along with a work schedule proposing at least four check-in meetings with NPS and NCPH.
3. an explanation of your previous experience engaging and consulting with pueblo and Tribal representatives and histories.

Future Work

Component B: Administrative History (to be funded in FY26 for work completed between October 2027 and December 2029)

The project historian will complete any remaining oral histories. They will conduct research using both primary and secondary sources to create an administrative history of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The final document will be a peer-reviewed, monograph length study. The project historian will also transfer the knowledge gained from the administrative history via a public presentation, developing a series of web essays, or another product aimed at engaging the public with this research.

Component B: Expected Deliverables

1. Oral Histories: Complete any remaining oral histories.
2. Administrative History

The following are the components of the administrative history, at a minimum:

- Table of contents: The table of contents must list the titles of all major divisions and the first-level subdivisions in the study and provide page numbers for all major divisions.

- List of illustrations: A list of illustrations must include captions and give page numbers for photographs, figures/illustrations, maps, and other forms of graphics subject matter. If warranted, separate lists for specific types of illustrations may be used.
- Acknowledgements: The acknowledgements must include any obligatory or appropriate personal or organizational acknowledgements.
- List of abbreviations and/or acronyms: The list must include nonstandard abbreviations and acronyms used in the report. The spelled-out version of a term should be given the first time the term appears within the study.
- Executive Summary: The executive summary must contain background information about the scope of the research preparation of the study. It will discuss methods and summarize major findings.
- Introduction: The introduction should include general background information on the geographic location, history, and significance of Chaco Culture National Historical Park and its resources. It should summarize previous administrative history efforts, describe the project's research methodology, and outline (or summarize) key themes/findings in the study.
- Narrative history (organized chronologically or topically, as appropriate): This section represents the main body of the product and must address the topics described above. The narrative must synthesize existing research and provide primary research, as appropriate. Use of primary sources, including oral history interviews, in writing this section is critical. Photographs, maps, charts, and other figures will be used as necessary to enhance the text. The overview history must contain footnotes (rather than end notes or reference notes).
- Epilogue or conclusion: The epilogue (or conclusion) must consist of a closing statement that provides further comment, if appropriate, on the interpretation of the information found in the study.
- Footnotes and Bibliography: All references should be made using the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
- Appendices:
 - Organization charts;
 - List of CHCU superintendents and other key staff;
 - Chronology of notable events in CHCU history;
 - Annual park visitation statistics;
 - Historic budget information;
 - Other documents or summaries as appropriate; and
 - Index

The administrative history will be reviewed in iterations (see schedule below). The project historian will submit one (1) electronic copy of each iteration to the Agreements Technical Representative (ATR) for review. The draft will be prepared using Microsoft Word 2010 or higher.

Drafts requiring extensive proofreading or lacking the minimum content required by this Statement of Work will be returned to the Recipient as unacceptable. Revised draft reports may be required if substantial revisions are needed. The NPS will provide written comments on the drafts within 45 days of receipt. The second full draft will be reviewed by a historian outside the NPS, coordinated by the Recipient.

The administrative history project team will work with the project tribal specialist (funded through a separate task agreement) to adhere to the Tribal Engagement Plan throughout the project.

The project historian will deliver the final version of the administrative history to the NPS as an electronic file or files in both Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF.

It is the responsibility of the project historian to gain permission to publish non-NPS images. All illustrations used in the final document will be credited. If any of the illustrations carry restrictions (such as one-time use limitations), the project historian will provide this information to the NPS. The electronic file(s) supplied to NPS will be adequate for transmission to a printer or for incorporation into a final file or files to be prepared by NPS for transmission to a printer to be selected by the NPS.

The Recipient is responsible for the final report copyediting, design and formatting of the cover, spine, and back for the final printed version of the administrative history are part of this project and will be approved by CHCU staff. The ATR will provide a signature page to include in the final formatted report.

The study will conform to National Park Service standards (Director’s Order #28) and the 2015 Guide to Preparing Administrative Histories (draft) regarding historical methodology of research and writing. The project historian should also follow the American Historical Association’s Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct (updated 2019). Furthermore, the narrative should be written in a manner that is clear, concise, and accessible to multiple audiences.

Component B	<i>Component B dates and deliverables are subject to change and dependent on funding.</i>		
Sample Draft Chapter		January 15, 2028	Payment as agreed upon between NPS, NCPH, and PI to be delivered 45 days after submission.
First Draft		June 15, 2028	Payment as agreed upon between NPS, NCPH, and PI to be delivered 45 days after submission.

Second Draft for External Peer Review		October 15, 2029	Payment as agreed upon between NPS, NCPH, and PI to be delivered 45 days after submission.
Final Draft of print-ready Administrative History, TOK, Project Records		December 20, 2029	