Natural and Cultural Crossroads: An Environmental History of Pecos National Historical Park

This project highlights the flexibility and fluidity of CESU partnerships. Research conducted by Colorado State University allowed the National Park Service to reassess cultural landscapes within the milieu of environmental history and helped resource managers develop a Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS).

The Public Lands History Center at Colorado State University began research for Crossroads of Change: An Environmental History of Pecos National Historical Park in 2008. The report synthesized the history of the park and examined cultural interactions as a catalyst of environmental change. From prehistoric history, to Spanish missions, and cattle ranching, Pecos National Historical Park provided researchers with ample opportunities to reassess the convergence of cultures upon a shared landscape as a means to explore environmental change over time. By researching the park’s cultural and natural history, researchers traced the impact of historical events upon the land and examined culturally significant features and resources within the landscape.
Research to Resource Management

The environmental history provides a nuanced view of cultural and natural resources that serves as a resource tool for park managers. Researchers composed a useable report that influenced the development of the park’s Resource Stewardship Strategy and embraced a holistic approach to managing cultural and natural resources. By blending both cultural and natural resources, the environmental history provides a context that reveals the interrelations between cultural and natural resources at Pecos National Historical Park.

12,000 years of history. Just 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the piñon, juniper, and pine woodlands of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Pecos National Historical Park protects the remains of an Indian pueblo and also showman Tex Austin’s Forked Lightning Ranch. Austin built the ranch trading post, shown above in the 1920s, on the remains of Kozlowski’s Stage Stop and Tavern, which served the Santa Fe Trail between 1858-1880. (courtesy/NPS)