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New Mexico, USA

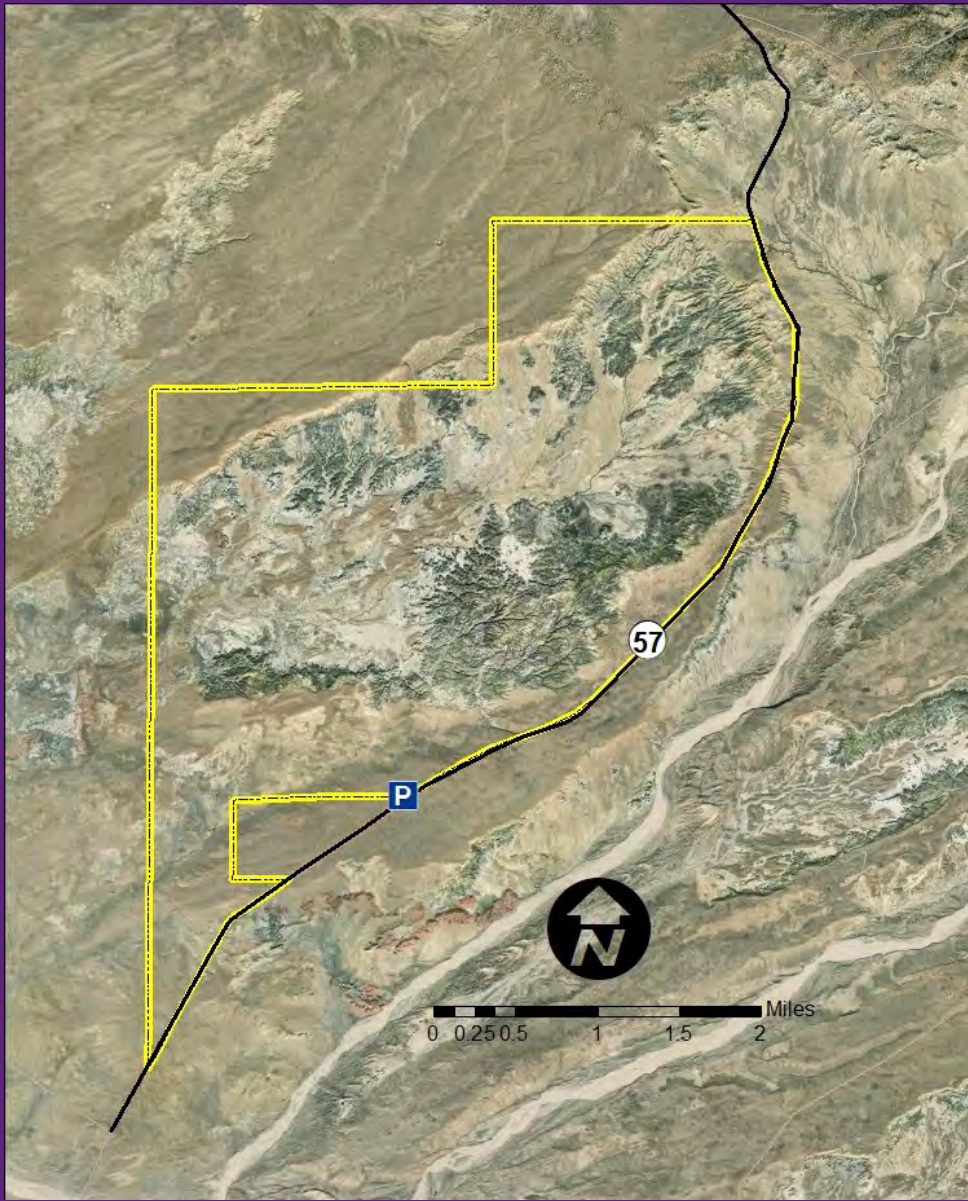
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Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness



EXPLORE

110 N. Ash Ave ~ www.aztecnm.com ~ (888) 543-4629



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An other-worldly land...

Managed and protected by the Bureau of Land Management, the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah (“Gray Salt”) Wilderness Study Area (WSA) also commonly referred to as Ah-Shi is an area much similar to the Bisti / De-Na-Zin Wilderness with extensively eroded badlands with scattered strange rock formations, hoodoos, petrified wood, and fossils from the late Cretaceous Period (dinosaur, crocodilian scutes, and turtle shell).



How the Rocks Formed

Seventy million years ago, this area was covered by a shallow sea and coastal swamps. What remains can be seen in the banded layers of clay that turned to rock. Petrified wood and whole tree stumps can be seen eroding out of the hills. Dinosaurs roamed this coast line too. At the end of the Cretaceous Period the seas withdrew and the dinosaurs disappeared. The seas left behind a flat plain – a layer of sandstone over soft shale and mudstones. Between 50 and 30 million years ago the Rocky Mountains rose to the north and east and



Turtle Hoodoo

other mountains to the west. As the rain washed down from the mountains, it wore away the sandstone, cutting through to the softer layers beneath. In some places, pieces of sandstone remained, protecting the layers below from the rain and water, and forming column-like “hoodoos.” These hoodoos can also look like mushrooms and arches.

Geology

The geology of the region is fairly similar to it’s counterpart the Bisti. The rock units include most of the upper Fruitland Formation and lower part of the Kirtland Formation, both late Cretaceous in age. The rocks are dominated by mudstones and intermittent sandstones, with occasional resistant channel sandstones.

The Land Today

Today the wilderness is home to ferruginous and red-tailed hawks, golden eagles and prairie falcons, all of whom nest in the area. Ground dwelling burrowing owls also nest there, living in abandoned prairie dog burrows. Other birds include piñon jays, ravens, quail and morning doves. Gunnison’s prairie dogs, rabbits, coyotes and badgers live in the wilderness, as do various lizards, snakes, tarantulas and scorpions.



Facilities

There are absolutely no facilities out in this region. Be mindful and pack plenty of snacks and fluids.

Help keep the wilderness wild!

Ah-Shi is a wilderness study area and there are no facilities or trails. Hiking, backpacking and primitive camping are encouraged. The area is surrounded by Navajo Nation Lands so be respectful and use maps to stay within the boundaries. These landforms took millions of years to form but can be destroyed in an instant! Please do not climb on delicate geological features. You are welcome to look at any fossils of plants and animals that you find, however under Federal Law, you CANNOT collect fossils of animals with bones (vertebrates). You may not sell any fossil that you collect from Federal land.

How to Get There

From US Highway 550, approximately 28 miles south of Bloomfield, NM turn right onto NM 57. Drive south/southwest approximately 13.5 miles, at which point NM 57 forms the boundary of the WSA. For the next 4-3/4 miles, the WSA will be on your right.

During inclement weather the road to Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah can be impassible.

Report destruction or vandalism to: US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
6251 College Boulevard
Farmington, NM 87402
(505) 564-7600