

## Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway

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### **A two-state Scenic and Historic Byway between Durango, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico**

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#### NOMINATION

prepared for review and consideration by the  
Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission

December 2014



#### ***Vision Statement:***

*The Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway provides a unique adventure on paved and remote back roads following the route of the historic Denver and Rio Grande Railroad between Durango, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico. The Byway offers opportunities to enjoy, learn about and appreciate the natural and cultural history of the sovereign nations of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and of the early pioneers of southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico.*

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**The Tracks Across Borders** Scenic and Historic Byway Nomination application has been prepared for review by the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission in July 2014 by the project coordination team of:

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*The Project Coordination Team submits this nomination application on behalf of the Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway Nomination Steering Committee and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. Gratitude to Jill Seyfarth for her excellent initiation of this project.*

*Information was obtained from a wide range of hard copy and online source material.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tracks Across Borders. The name itself begins to reveal a unique journey through two states, Native American cultures, breathtaking countryside, treaties and technology, across ancient and historic time, and varied communities of the present day. From the romance of the rails and authentic Native American culture to spectacular scenery and a myriad of recreational opportunities, Colorado's newest Byway is a richly layered time capsule offering the traveler a comprehensive experience in all aspects. This nomination application is for the Colorado section of the Byway.

Located in southwest Colorado and northern New Mexico, the route traces the narrow gauge right-of-way of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG). The Byway's primary feature is one of Colorado's greatest stories - the creation and development of the state's first, and ultimately the nation's largest, narrow gauge railroad system. Prominent sections of the Byway corridor are located on, or adjacent to, the original railroad grade. Once connected via the railroad, Durango and Chama serve as the primary gateway cities to this Byway; two National Historic Landmarks will be linked once again. The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad have achieved the highest designation of national historic significance in the country.

Following the historic railroad grade, the Byway passes through the Southern Ute Indian Tribe reservation land, whose headquarters and superlative Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum are located in Ignacio, Colorado. The route travels through and near early 19th century Hispanic settlements that pre-date the railroad. Beautiful natural landscapes, farming towns and historic settlements punctuate the route.

The Byway skirts the north end of Navajo Lake, a little-known environmental and recreational gem in the Colorado and New Mexico State Parks systems. Navajo Lake State Park is often referred to as Colorado's Lake Powell and is a major recreational, educational and scenic attraction on the Byway. Here travelers can recreate and learn about natural history, prehistoric occupation and the complexities of western water development, which included the 1960s rerouting of the D&RG railroad tracks north around the future shoreline of the Navajo Lake reservoir.

Chimney Rock National Monument is an essential thematic feature of national significance on the Byway. The round-trip spur provides access and increased exposure to one of America's newest National Monuments, designated in September 2012. Chimney Rock is a place of unparalleled natural beauty sitting on a high mesa at the southern edge of the San Juan Mountains within the San Juan National Forest. Chimney Rock is one of the highest elevation Ancestral Puebloan sites. Over 1,000 years ago, this was a place of mystery, a sacred place, and celestial observatory for the

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Ancestral Puebloans. Chimney Rock holds spiritual significance for many tribes including the Southern Utes.

This route offers many unique Colorado stories related to the railroad, Native American and Hispanic culture and prehistory that are not offered by the other byways in the state. No other byway focuses as thoroughly on the economic and engineering heritage of the Denver and Rio Grande railroad. The route expands on the history and culture of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and offers access to premier recreational and natural features that, to date, have received little attention in Colorado. One short segment of the Byway is on an earthen road that offers a true sense of exploration and discovery.

South of the state/tribal border the route has already been designated a New Mexico Scenic Byway, known as the Narrow Gauge Byway. The historic railroad grade, the Continental Divide, the Bill Humphries Wildlife Area and the Jicarilla Apache Nation itself – over which the Byway traverses - are examples of the features that will be recognized on this Colorado portion of the Byway. Interpretation of the wildlife migration routes will be an interesting educational feature.

While federal financial support of the byway program is not available, there is still great value in Byway designation. A byway designation would help with the identification and protection of significant – and irreplaceable - resources along the route. Information about the Byway will serve to inform and educate the traveler on the need to respect and protect sovereign tribal lands. In other portions of the corridor where appropriate, Byway designation will assist in promoting economic development by providing common goals for collaboration among the communities and major land owners. History Colorado's staff is preparing a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the railroad ghost town of Gato (Pagosa Junction), which is a prominent historic feature of the route.

A groundswell of support is growing. Archuleta County, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Village of Chama and Rio Arriba County (New Mexico) have provided letters of support. Byway designation is expected to have direct beneficial economic impacts on visitor traffic, visitor expenditures and total retail sales – all important in rural communities.

With the designation of Tracks Across Borders, Colorado's newest Scenic and History Byway could serve as a model for Byway efforts across the nation in the future.

Welcome to the story, the vision and the reason for the Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway.

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## SECTION I: -STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tracks Across Borders will become Colorado's newest Scenic and Historic Byway, offering travelers a unique multi-faceted discovery opportunity in an underserved portion of Colorado. The stories revealed throughout the Byway corridor are evocative and date from the early Creocene-era in geologic time to today and range in scope from ancient native culture to the 19th century industrial railroad economy and into 21st century energy technologies. Located in southwest Colorado and continuing into northern New Mexico along the New Mexico-designated "Narrow Gauge Byway" with a proposed extension to Chama, the route traces the narrow gauge right-of-way of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.

Equally rooted in significance is this Byway's linkage with two sovereign native nations who share a border: the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT), headquartered in Ignacio, Colorado and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, based in Dulce, New Mexico. In Ignacio, the state-of-art Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum provides a thorough learning opportunity for Byway travelers to discover and fully appreciate this tribe. An essential goal of this Byway designation is to help protect the land and resources along the corridor by increasing the public's understanding of and respect for the property and resources of all partners and land holders. Today, the Mouache and Caputa bands comprise the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Historically, the D&RG passed through these lands and traveled to or near pre-railroad Hispanic settlements including Juanita, Colorado. Descendants of early Hispanic settlers remain on the lands today. Even earlier voyagers came through these lands well before the arrival of the railroad. *(A more thorough discussion of the Byway's history is found in that specific section.)*

Two significant mid-route features include Navajo Lake State Park and Chimney Rock National Monument. Navajo Lake State Park is a relatively little-known environmental and recreational gem in the Colorado and New Mexico State Parks systems. The Byway skirts the prehistoric archaeological sites located in and next to Navajo Lake.

Chimney Rock National Monument and Archaeological Site, designated as such in September 2012, is accessed via a north spur up Route 151. The Visitor Center, programs and guided tours provide a unique ancient Chacoan-culture educational opportunity to the traveler. In all, eight highly significant historic, recreational, educational and cultural sites may be experienced along the 124 mile Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway.

This route offers many unique Colorado stories related to the railroad, scientific discovery, Hispanic culture, Native American culture and prehistory that are not offered by the other byways in the state. No other byway focuses on this portion of the Denver and Rio Grande nor connects two National Historic Landmarks of rail heritage. The route expands on the history and culture of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) and offers access to premier recreational and natural features that, to date, have received little attention in Colorado. Travelers even experience a 4.3 mile portion of the Byway on a remote earthen road (Southern Ute 169) that offers a true sense of exploration and discovery.

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State designation is highly valuable and will be vitally important for the Tracks Across Borders Byway. Although national designation, direct federal funding and dedicated funding set-asides for enhancements are no longer available through the National Scenic Byways Program, state designation through the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway program will accomplish multiple goals toward achieving the overall vision for the route. State designation will assist with the identification and protection of significant resources along the route and will provide a catalyst to market and promote economic development activities in this portion of the state. State designation will also encourage local and regional leadership for partner collaboration among the communities and major land owners.

Evidenced through the initial 30-member steering committee, a groundswell of support is surfacing. The Southern Ute Tribe, Archuleta County and Durango Welcome Center have provided letters of support with more expected. In New Mexico, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Rio Arriba County and the Village of Chama (the eastern gateway to the Byway) have also provided enthusiastic letters of support. History Colorado's staff is preparing a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the railroad ghost town of Gato (Pagosa Junction) - a prominent historic feature of the route. The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is partnering with the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad to finance the start-up effort.

### Significance of Economic Impact with Byway Designation

Byway designation is expected to have direct beneficial economic impacts on visitor traffic, visitor expenditures and total retail sales – all important in rural communities. In three recent economic benefit case studies of Byways in Colorado (the Gold Belt Tour, Alpine Loop and the Unaweep Tabeguache) numerous quantitative and qualitative benefits have been determined: boosting tourism, leveraging investment, increasing volunteerism and expanding visibility are particularly noted. The Federal government, the National Scenic Byway Foundation and many others are keenly interested in measuring and reporting on economic impacts directly connected to Byway designation. The challenge in distinguishing general growth from tourism growth – especially tourism growth specifically connected to the designation of a Byway – has been the most difficult hurdle in measuring impacts. Pre-designation baseline data has generally been unavailable from which to measure success.

With the designation of Tracks Across Borders, Colorado's newest Scenic and Historic Byway could and should serve as a role model for Byway efforts in the future, particularly within an economics context. Through CDOT and the network of the existing 25 designated Byways statewide, a concerted effort to measure benefits could begin. One tool recently discussed at the 25th annual Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Conference is the "Byways Economic Impact Tool" developed by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO.) This tool guides local Byway leaders how to obtain, measure and report on visitor profiles, spending, investments, property values and tax rates. Comparatively, one of the key – and mostly widely celebrated – hallmarks of the National Main Street Center is their annual compilation of

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statistics demonstrating cross-sector economic impacts at the local, statewide and national levels.

The engine is fired up and we're on a roll!

## **SECTION II: CONTACT PERSONS**

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## SECTION III: DESCRIPTION

The Tracks Across Borders Byway connects the towns Durango, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico via a 124.5-mile route along a combination of U.S. and State highways, county roads and a Bureau of Indian Affairs road. Most of the route is on paved or graded gravel roads, and a short 10 mile section straddling the Colorado-New Mexico state line is earthen and may have variable driving conditions depending on the weather. Given the current roadway composition, this section may require a high-clearance four-wheel drive during wet conditions to negotiate slick muddy surfaces and ruts. Otherwise the road can be driven with a two-wheel drive automobile;

### Land Jurisdictions (Colorado):

- Archuleta County
- La Plata County
- San Juan National Forest
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
- Privately-owned ranches

### Land Jurisdictions (New Mexico):

- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Rio Arriba County
- Bureau of Reclamation  
(managed by Colorado State Parks/DOW-Navajo Lake State Park)
- New Mexico State Department of Wildlife (DOW)

### Towns/Settlements:

- Durango, Colorado
- Carbon Junction, Colorado
- Oxford, Colorado
- Falfa, Colorado
- Ignacio, Colorado
- Arboles, Colorado
- Carracas, Colorado (now gone though historically significant as the point where the two San Juan Express trains met heading their respective east-west directions. Potential industrial archaeological site.)
- Gato (AKA Pagosa Junction) Colorado - uninhabited
- Juanita, Colorado - uninhabited
- Dulce, New Mexico
- Lumberton, New Mexico
- Chama, New Mexico

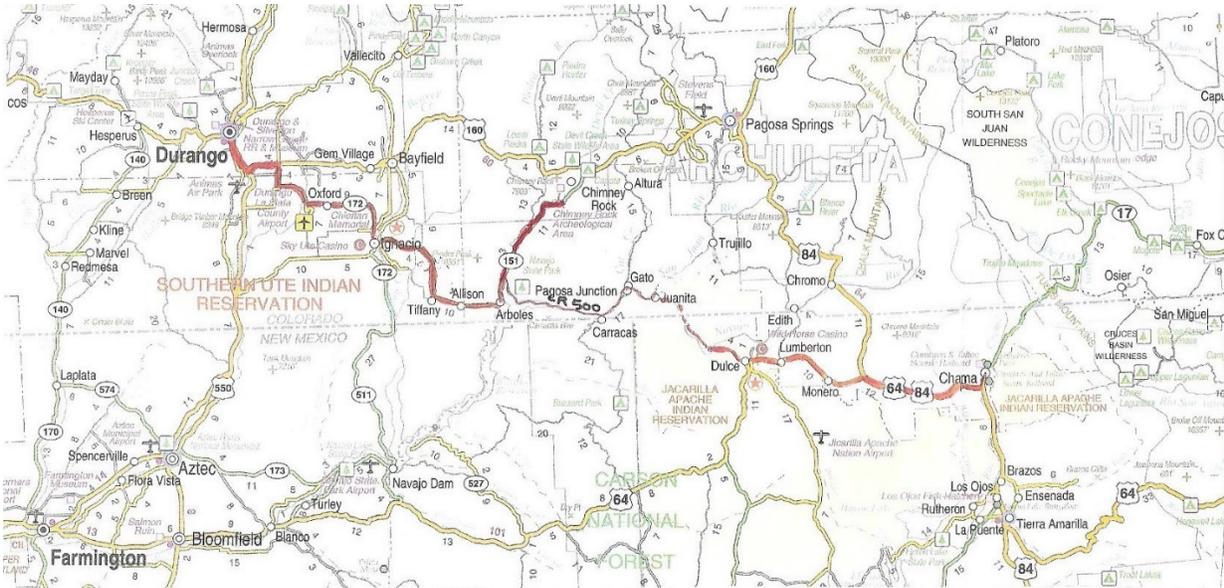
### Adjacent Towns:

- Tiffany, Colorado
- Allison, Colorado
- Pagosa Springs, Colorado

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## IV. MAPS

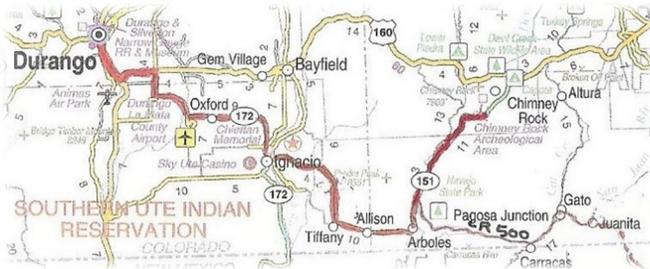
This map illustrates the general route of the byway. More detailed maps are included in the Conceptual Plan component of the nomination.



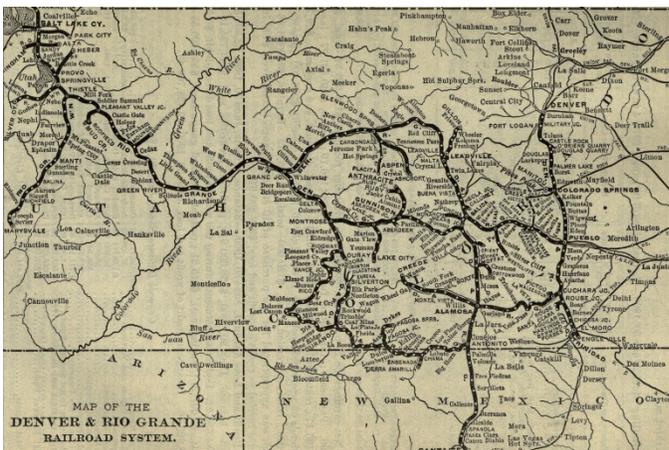
Paved Road 

Graded Gravel Road- CR 500 

Earthen Road – may require high clearance or 4 wheel drive at times. Slick when wet. 



The image (left) zooms in on the Colorado section of the Byway.



This image is a historic 1891 map of the D&RG route showing the geographic significance and extent of the Chama-to-Durango Narrow Gauge line

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## V. NOMINATION CRITERIA

*A. The proposed scenic and historic byway must possess unusual, exceptional, and/or distinctive scenic, recreational, historical, educational, scientific, geological, natural, wildlife, cultural or ethnic features.*

### Scenic

Scenic qualities are defined as the heightened visual experience of natural and man-made elements within the Byway corridor. As described throughout this nomination, the scenic qualities of this Byway are striking.

From the sweeping San Juan Mountains and mesa panoramas to wild, lush riparian ecosystems along the San Juan and Navajo Rivers, the Tracks Across Borders Byway accesses one of Colorado's least traveled regions. Scenic views take in the pastoral beauty of miles of working agricultural landscapes with farming towns, historic sheep ranches and railroad settlements along the corridor, all of which contribute to a broad understanding of the centuries of human habitation in harmony with the land along this route over the energy-rich San Juan Basin.

One of America's newest National Monuments, Chimney Rock, is also a scenic and sacred place, serving as a celestial observatory and a seasonal calendar for the Ancestral Puebloans over 1000 years ago. The Monument encompasses 4,726 acres, preserving hundreds of prehistoric sites located around the twin spires known as Chimney Rock and Companion Rock. It is the most isolated and remote communities connected to Chaco Canyon and it is also the highest in elevation, affording spectacular views from the trail to the Great House.

Near the mid-point, travelers will pass through the former railroad supply village of Gato, also known as Pagosa Junction. This lumber town is located at the junction of the Pagosa Northern and the Rio Grande railroad to went to Pagosa Springs. Gato was once the site of a major lumber mill, now gone. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe has designated access (primarily fishing) along the scenic San Juan River; permits are required. Here the above-grade vestiges of the D&RGW's past are found and help to tell the story of the railroad: a water tower, freight cars and other industrial archaeological artifacts are still visible, though currently threatened with deterioration and vandalism. The village's church, Iglesia de San Juan, built in 1927 (the third church for the community), was located on the hillside out of flood danger. Owned by the Diocese in Pueblo, this historic sacred place provides a hillside pullout with room for a few vehicles affording a stunning overlook of the former riverside settlement and is an ideal picnic and photo opportunity spot. This building is still in use for special occasions.

Additional scenic highlights include:

- Both gateway communities, Durango and Chama, which exude scenic qualities and small historic town character.

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- Both narrow gauge railroad depots and train yards are destinations for thousands of people and provide exciting, memorable photo opportunities.
- Up close views of the lands of the Southern Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches, each with their distinctive cultural connections to the earth.
- Wildlife of great diversity throughout the corridor (see page 21)
- Navajo Lake State Park – Colorado’s version of Lake Powell – is beautiful and affords ample opportunity to view wildlife and the scenic landscape from the water.

Enormous potential for multi-modal transportation access including biking (road and mountain), motorcycling, hiking and small watercraft for river journeys such as kayaks and canoes.

## Historical

Thousands of years of history create an extremely rich environment for a unique place-based experience along this Byway. This is home to many stories related to prehistory through contemporary occupation of the area where human exploration, conquest, development and settlement have layered and shaped this remote region – and thus providing a most significant travel experience.

Archaeological studies in the Navajo Lake region have identified numerous homes and farming sites from more than 2000 years ago. Numerous archaeological sites located on Southern Ute Indian Tribe land and Chimney Rock National Monument are further evidence of a complex and wide-ranging social network of people. Hispanic settlement along the riverine areas that dates as early as the 1860s. Further, Hispanos used this area for herding as early as the establishment of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant of 1832, the first land grant in Colorado. Hispanos settled this area before tribal reservations were established and after tribal lands were defined, continued to co-exist with the tribes. (*Hispano references: Ruth Lambert, San Juan Mountains Association.*)

The main theme stories are numerous; a few are briefly summarized here.

### Early Explorers

In 1765, Juan Maria Antonio Rivera explored this region occupied by the Utes. Sent at the request of New Mexico Governor Tomás Vélez Cachupin, Rivera led an expedition from Santa Fe northward through present-day Colorado and Utah in search of silver and with the goal of thwarting the expansion of other European powers in the region. As the story goes, rumors had reached the Governor’s office in Santa Fe of a Ute Indian who traded a piece of silver to a blacksmith in Abiquiu, offering a tantalizing possibility that

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there might be more of this precious metal in Spain's relatively unknown distant territory to the north. The Governor decided to sanction an expedition to track down the rumored source of the silver. He authorized Rivera to lead this search. Capuchín's order sponsored the first official venture into this northern extent of New Spain. While it was not well known to government officials, the far flung region was quite familiar to the underground trading network of New Spain. Clandestine buying and selling between the Spaniards and the Indian tribes had been going on since Don Juan de Oñate led the first colonists to the Rio Grande River in 1598, but Spanish law set very high taxes on trade goods, and prohibited trade with certain Indian tribes, so publicly acknowledged trade was minimal. Many members of the exploration party had surreptitiously travelled the route before. It is reported that Rivera returned to Santa Fe with gold ore samples, which were among the first recorded discoveries of gold in present-day Colorado, though the discovery created no significant interest at the time.

The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition was conducted in July and August, 1776, to find an overland route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to their Catholic mission in Monterey, California. Francisco Atanasio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante, Franciscan priests, and Don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, a cartographer, traveled with eight men from Santa Fe through present day western Colorado to Utah. The initial part of their journey followed the route taken by Juan Rivera eleven years earlier; they were guided by three Timpanog Utes. Their route traversed the Byway corridor at least twice: from Dulce, New Mexico, they made their way into present day Colorado through Arboles, Ignacio and Durango. Hardships experienced along the journey forced the group to return to Santa Fe via Arizona without reaching their intended destination; however, during the course of their journey, they documented the route and provided detailed information about the "lush, mountainous land filled with game and timber, strange ruins of stone cities and villages, and rivers showing signs of precious metals." The maps and documentation of the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition were extremely significant for future travelers. Their route became part of the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe. *(References: Jill Seyfarth and [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/escalante-and-dominguez-begin-expedition](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/escalante-and-dominguez-begin-expedition))*

Seventy years after the Franciscans, traders followed the Old Spanish Trail, established in 1829 which is now a federally designated National Historic Trail that crosses the Byway near the crossing of the San Juan River at the Colorado/New Mexico state line. Travelers on the Tracks Across Borders Byway pass through and near Hispanic settlements, including Juanita, Colorado. These settlements offer insight into how the region appeared to the settlers who travelled from New Mexico in the 1870s and 1880s to live and work among the Ute and Jicarilla Apache. Many of the communities along the route are of Hispanic origin; it was due to this early migration and the influence of cultural sharing between the Hispanics and Utes that form the basis of the modern tribe. The historic sheep herding and logging economies of the area boomed with the coming of the railroad and are evident in remnants of the small farming communities and logging camps. The Hispano heritage of this region is extremely significant and should be a key aspect woven throughout the interpretive and educational aspects of the byway. Early Hispano development patterns are evidenced today.

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## The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW)

The D&RGW was an American Class I railroad company organized in 1870. It began operations as a three foot (914 mm) narrow gauge line running south from Denver in 1871. The railroad – the epitome of mountain railroading - served mainly as a transcontinental bridge line between Denver and Salt Lake City and was a major origin of coal and mineral traffic. The D&RGW operated the highest mainline rail line in the United States, over the 10,240 feet (3,120 m) Tennessee Pass in Colorado, and the famed routes through the Moffat Tunnel and the Royal Gorge. At its height, around 1890, the entire Denver & Rio Grande network was the largest operating narrow gauge railroad in North America. Known for its independence, the western line (D&RGW) operated the last private intercity passenger train in the US, the Rio Grande Zephyr.

Due to the significance of the railroad and the regulations under which it operated, the historic route is documented in unusual detail with the so-called “Valuation Maps” of 1919 that surveyed the railroad’s route, its structures and adjacent man made structures and settlements.

The line known as the San Juan Extension – which is the focus of this Byway corridor- was built from Alamosa over 10,015 feet (3,053 m) Cumbres Pass, along the Colorado-New Mexico border, reaching Durango in August 1881. The line continued north from Durango to the rich mining areas around Silverton in July 1882. The route served isolated farming and mining communities, transporting raw materials such as timber and mineral ore. The San Juan Express (also known as simply the San Juan), a passenger train, ran from February 11, 1937 until January 31, 1951.

## Operations closure and abandonment

Even as the D&RGW utilized the best new standard-gauge technology to compete with other transcontinental carriers, the railroad continued to operate the surviving steam-powered narrow gauge lines, including the famed narrow gauge line between Durango and Silverton, Colorado. Then, with the repeal of the Sherman Act in 1893 and its immediate, devastating impact on the silver mining industry, traffic over the San Juan Extension failed to warrant the investment necessary to convert to standard gauge. Over the next few decades it became an “isolated anachronism”, receiving its last major upgrades in equipment and infrastructure in the 1920s. Although the D&RGW suffered various bankruptcies in the 1920s and 1930s, they conducted numerous upgrades to their equipment past 1920, at least as late as 1937, when they invested quite a bit of money into the San Juan Express cars. Most of the current locomotives in use on both the Durango-Silverton and the Cumbres & Toltec routes date to the mid and late 1920s; they were significant investments at the time.

By the late 1950s mining had dwindled substantially and the line was on the verge of abandonment, but an oil boom in the San Juan Basin and near Farmington, New Mexico created a traffic surge that kept the line operating for another decade hauling oil and pipe. Operations continued through the 1960s though at a substantially reduced

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level. Finally, in 1969, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) granted the Rio Grande's request to abandon its remaining narrow gauge main line trackage, thereby ending the last use of steam locomotives in general freight service in the United States.

At the end of 1970 it operated 1,903 miles (3,063 km) of road on 3,227 miles (5,193 km) of track; that year it carried 7733 ton-miles of revenue freight and 21 million passenger-miles. In 1988, the Rio Grande's parent corporation, Rio Grande Industries, purchased Southern Pacific Transportation Company, and as the result of a merger, the larger Southern Pacific Railroad name was chosen for identity. Today, most former D&RGW main lines are owned and operated by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Most of the abandoned track was dismantled soon after the ICC's decision, but through the combined efforts of an energetic and resourceful group of railway preservationists and local civic interests, the two most scenic portions of the line were saved by the D&RGW, until they were sold to the states of Colorado and New Mexico. Today, these lines have become internationally famous National Historic Landmarks.

### The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

The last D&RGW narrow gauge line, from Durango to Silverton, was sold in 1981 to the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, exactly one hundred years after the line went into operation. From the very beginning, the railroad was promoted as a scenic route for passenger service although the line was constructed primarily to haul mine ores, both gold and silver, from the San Juan Mountains. It is estimated over \$300 million in precious metals has been transported over this route. The Sherman Act of 1893 forced the 10 large silver mines serviced by the line to close and throughout the next twenty years the railroad faced many challenges: landslides, floods, snow, war and financial instability. When the US Government entered WW I and again in WWII, the railroad was back in use though it was Hollywood who helped ensure the future of the historic narrow gauge railroad. Several movies were filmed utilizing the railroad and its vintage rolling stock which helped to build a thriving tourism business which continues today. Currently, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, operated by American Heritage Railways, continues to provide year-round train service, with vintage, 100% coal-fired, steam-operated locomotives, coaches and open gondolas for panoramic views.

### The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is America's highest and longest remaining narrow gauge railroad. In 1970, the states of Colorado and New Mexico jointly purchased and assumed operations of the 64-mile long track and line-side structures from Antonito, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico nine steam locomotives, over 130 freight and work cars, and the Chama yard and maintenance facility, for \$547,120 dollars. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad began tourism excursions the next year. Today the railroad is operated for the states by the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission, an interstate agency authorized by an act of Congress in 1974 and is now

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the highest narrow gauge steam railroad in the United States. Care of the historic assets and interpretation of the railroad is entrusted to the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a non-profit, member-based organization whose mission is to preserve and interpret the railroad as a living history museum for the benefit of the public and for the people of Colorado and New Mexico, who own it. As the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad San Juan Extension, the railway was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The boundaries of the historic district were increased in 2007 and in 2012, the C&T Scenic Railroad achieved National Historic Landmark status.

### Navajo Lake and Navajo State Park

2014 marks Navajo State Park's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Developed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the history of this reservoir and its impacts to the area are significant aspects for further incorporation into the Byway story. The relocation of the D&RGW tracks, the flooding of the Hispano villages including the original Arboles (a railroad support town and settlement) and the technological developments connected with the construction of the dam for irrigation purposes are just three of the key historical components of this Byway asset. Additionally, mitigation work of the late 1950s provided most of the known archaeological data about early occupation of the area.

### The Southern Ute Indian Tribe

*"There is no migration story, we were placed here in the mountains, we have always been here, we will always be here." (Source: official website of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.)*

The Ute Indians, of the Shoshone Indian linguistic stock, were originally divided into seven nomadic, and forest-dwelling tribes who lived on a vast territory in Colorado and parts of Utah and northern New Mexico prior to the arrival of the European settlers. The tribes were the Capote, the Mouache, the Parianucs, the Tabeguache, the Uintah, the Weeminuche, and the Yampa. The traditional lifestyle was hunting for a wide variety of game; plants were gathered for food and medicine.

With the settlement of New Mexico by the Spanish in 1598, early trade was established between the Ute people and the Spanish. In 1637, the Utes acquired the horse (escapees from Spanish troops in the region), making them the first Native Americans to introduce the horse into their culture. The Dominguez-Escalante expedition came into Ute territory in 1776 with the aid of Ute guides. Three years later, the Mouache Utes and Jicarilla Apaches joined New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza in a successful campaign against the Comanche.

1849 marked the date of the first treaty between Utes and the United States, which was signed at Abiquiu, New Mexico. In 1868, the Utes and the U.S. federal government created their reservation consisting of approximately the western one-third of Colorado. The Brunot Agreement of 1873, which was signed into law by President Grant the following year, essentially ceded most of the land to the U.S. Government. It would take

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another 63 years for the Restoration Act of 1937 to return 222,016 acres to the Southern Utes.

The Consolidated Ute Indian Reservation was established in 1918 and, in 1924 American Indians become United States citizens. The Ute Chieftain's Memorial was dedicated on the last day of the 1939 Ute Fair honoring four of the tribe's most revered leaders: Chiefs Ouray, Severo, Buckskin Charley and Ignacio. In 1993, the Southern Ute Tribe signed a gaming compact with State of Colorado to open a Class III Casino on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation.

### The Jicarilla Apache Nation

One of six Athabaskan groups to migrate south from Canada to the American Southwest between 1300-1500 A.D., the Jicarilla Apaches, comprised of the Ollero and Llanero bands, settled in an area of some 50 million acres spread over present day New Mexico and western Oklahoma. The tribe maintained semi-permanent campsites and favorite locations for hunting and gathering. The Jicarilla learned about farming and pottery from the Puebloan peoples and learned about survival on the plains from the Plains Indians such as the Cheyenne and Arapahoe. They had a rich and varied diet and lifestyle. Just as with the Utes, the 18th century brought pressure from Colonial New Spain and other tribes as well as westward expansion of the United States, which resulted in significant loss of property, removal from their sacred lands, and relocation to lands not well suited for survival. Today their land is a "combination of mountains and rugged mesas, and is considered a sportman's paradise with trout fishing, waterfowl hunting, and turkey, elk and deer hunting."\* Jicarilla means "little basket" in Spanish, as they are widely acclaimed for the beauty, artistry and excellent craftwork of their traditional baskets. The Nation's headquarters is in Dulce at the eastern gateway to the existing Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway, designated as such by the State of New Mexico.

(\*Source: [www.jicarillaonline.com](http://www.jicarillaonline.com))

### **EDUCATIONAL**

Numerous educational opportunities – both guided and through self-discovery – are available for travelers across this Byway ranging from archaeological and native cultures to natural sciences, history, transportation, western settlement patterns and industrial heritage. The route begins in Durango, which was platted in September 1880 following the 1879 land purchase by a real estate subsidiary of the **Denver & Rio Grande**.

The railroad arrived in Durango on August 5, 1881 and construction on the line to the Silverton mining district began in the fall of the same year. This historic train has been in continuous operation between Durango and Silverton since 1882, carrying passengers behind vintage steam locomotives and rolling stock original to the line – creating a rolling education experience on board the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. The history and culture museums in Durango are the Animas Museum and the Fort Lewis College Center for Southwest Studies. Fort Lewis College offers accessible, high

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quality, baccalaureate liberal arts education to a diverse student population of approximately 4,000.

In Ignacio, the **Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum** is southwestern Colorado's newest and most impressive cultural exhibition and museum. Self-guided tours through the permanent gallery allow for self-discovery of the history and culture of the Southern Ute. Multiple interactive exhibits and interactive learning stations are located throughout the gallery. Discover how to bead, make a medicine pouch, tie on an arrow head or sit in the buffalo hide tipi and listen to stories told by Ute elders. Guided tours by tribal members offer a more in-depth introduction to the museum. Programs and classes are also designed around different aspects of Ute history and are specially designed to engage visitors of all ages, so visitors can learn at a pace that is right for them. The Oral History Library provides an exceptional opportunities to listen to Tribal Elders tell stories of the "old times" and gain deeper insight into Ute history. Visitors will discover just how much things have changed for the Ute people after life on the reservation progressed and more.

**Chimney Rock** is a special place that was proclaimed a National Monument on September 21, 2012. The Visitor Center and guided walking tours provide substantial learning opportunities, offering insights into the many aspects of the National Monument. Night Sky Archeoastronomy programs are very popular, occurring from May 15 and September 30. The Visitor Cabin amphitheater is the site of programing that begins with a variety of topic discussions ranging from what the ancient people noticed in the night sky to how a telescope helps us see stars and includes current topics in astronomy. Following the discussions, visitors drive to the High Mesa parking lot where volunteer astronomers await with telescopes to provide a closer look at the wonders of the night sky. The Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA) is seeking funding to add three new Celestron's SkyProdigy 6 scopes greatly enhancing the adventure for all participants. The Celestron scopes feature 100% automatic alignment, making its computerized object-finding virtually foolproof for people with limited knowledge of the night sky. Additionally, with the National Monument designation came increased national recognition and a dramatic rise in requests for additional educational opportunities from regional schools, private groups and individuals. CRIA is developing K-12 classroom curricula with hands-on learning experiences to increase the options for instruction and expand exploration by the students prior to their arrival at Chimney Rock for a site tour. Chimney Rock Classroom Kits will provide teachers with five classroom sessions of instructional and testing materials and accompanying activities for students to prepare for their visit to the site. Reusable kits will be provided with postage attached for return to the CRIA Office upon completion of the activities where the hands-on take-home material will be replaced and kits prepared for the next classroom.

The **Navajo Lake State Park** Visitor Center is located at the park entrance in Arboles. Here visitor education services and information are available regarding the archeological, geologic, historic and wildlife features of the park. Displays, brochures, a bookstore, sale of passes, registrations, fishing licenses, and more are located here;

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the hours of operation vary with the season. Navajo Lake State Park is open year round. *(See Recreational section, page 24 for more details about this State Park.)*

At the point where the Tracks Across Borders Byway leaves the Southern Ute Indian Tribal land at the Colorado/New Mexico border, the traveler enters Rio Arriba County and the **Jicarilla Apache Nation**, whose headquarters are in Dulce. The reservation was established in 1887 and the tribal government was established in 1937 with its own constitution and by-laws. Multiple educational opportunities are available to learn about this sovereign nation, from farming, livestock raising and the early timber operations and later oil and gas fields supported by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. “Today the Jicarilla Apache have become an economic powerhouse of northern New Mexico. Dulce is now a community living in two worlds, fully immersed in the American mainstream economy with a world-class hunting lodge, significant oil and gas operations, and widely diversified investments while fiercely maintaining the centuries-old language, culture, religion, and ceremonies of Jicarilla Apache Indians.” *(Resource: Indian Arts and Cultural museum (Sante Fe, New Mexico) website.)*

The eastern gateway of the Tracks Across Borders Byway is Chama, New Mexico – home to the southern terminus of the historic **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad** which received National Historic Landmark designation in 2013. The depot’s Visitor Center and Gift Shop is fully stocked with informational brochures, books, videos, maps and CDs – and the excursion itself north to Antonito, Colorado is an ultimate and highly memorable educational experience, as authentic and true to early 20<sup>th</sup> century railroading as any in the US. The ‘Soot and Cinders’ Educational Curriculum has been developed to help students of many grade levels understand the history of the train industry in America. “This is an educational tool towards understanding modes of transportation and alternative energy systems for our future. The curriculum has been developed by the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec as a historical perspective of trains in Colorado, New Mexico, and America in general. It is teacher-friendly and can be adapted to many grade levels.” *(Resource: [www.cumbrestoltec.com](http://www.cumbrestoltec.com))*

### SCIENTIFIC

Multiple scientific discoveries have been made in this vast region including paleontological, biological, geological and ecological. *(See the Nature and Geologic sections of this nomination for more science connections.)*

As a geologic region, the San Juan Basin is noted for its large deposits of coal, uranium, and natural gas. This is among the largest coal bed basins in North America and the second largest gas field in the United States. Energy discoveries and the business of industrial extraction was what sustained the D&RG far beyond the commercial viability of other narrow gauge railroads in the US before it finally ceased operation in 1969.

The D&RGW’s ability to service the energy fields was the reason for the long continuance of the railroad past its usefulness in the timber and ore-extraction eras.

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Since the first well was drilled in 1901, thousands have been drilled since. It is one of the oldest producing areas in the United States, with the first conventional natural gas discovered in 1921, and the first coal bed methane (CBM) well spud in 1948. Since the 1980s, the Fruitland Formation in the basin has been one of the major US sources of coal bed methane. Overall, there are reportedly more than 20,000 oil and gas wells in the San Juan Basin.

It should be noted that the Southern Ute Indian Tribe is one of the most successful Tribes in terms of energy resources, operating five energy businesses and being actively engaged with the Council of Energy Resource Tribes on federal energy issues.

## **GEOLOGICAL**

The Tracks Across Borders Byway traverses the northern section of the great San Juan Basin, an ancient geologic structural basin lying in the southeastern part of the Colorado Plateau that has long been recognized as a source of varied natural resources. The Basin's main portion covers around 4,600 square miles encompassing much of northwestern New Mexico, southwest Colorado, and parts of Arizona and Utah. The region is arid with rugged topography plains and valleys interspersed by buttes, canyons and mesas. All may be viewed from the Byway. Drainage in the structural basin is general westward from the Continental Divide.

According to the Navajo State Park website, the park...

*features a 15,000 surface-acre reservoir formed in the San Juan River Valley of southwestern Colorado. The San Juan River is joined by the Piedra River near the northern park boundary. Uplands within the park are characterized by flat-topped mesas and gently rolling hills, occasionally cut by steep-sided canyons. The uplands are Tertiary sedimentary rocks deposited during Eocene times, which are represented by sandstones and conglomerates of the San Jose and Blanco Basin formations and Telluride Conglomerate. Quaternary surficial deposits are present along both rivers as alluvium, terrace gravels and alluvial fan deposits.*

The geologic history of this corridor in the San Juan Basin began during Cenozoic and Mesozoic times. There were three major land-shaping episodes each with several less extensive regressive-transgressive cycles of activity and dormancy. The Tertiary rocks of the basin were deposited after a hiatus during which time the topmost Cretaceous rocks were upwarped and truncated. Today, Paleocene and Eocene rocks represent the Tertiary sediments of the San Juan Basin. Dakota sandstone was deposited on a vast erosion surface, overlying Mancos shale in areas. Greenhorn limestone outcrops usually hold up low hills above the adjoining shale lowlands. Within the stratigraphic section of the Basin lie three distinct Cretaceous Age fluvial-lacustrine-marine sequences of sediments averaging 5,000 feet thick. The northern and western edge are formed by a structure known as the Hogback Monocline; the northeastern edge is formed by the Archuleta Arch. The tectonic evolution of the basin is extensive and

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complex, a veritable mixing-bowl of geology. Over 2,500 papers, reports and studies have been written and/or published on the Basin. (Primary sources: [www.energytomorrow.org](http://www.energytomorrow.org), U.S. Geologic Survey, US Dept of the Interior)

## NATURAL

Naturalists will be richly rewarded throughout the variety of views and ecology found along the Byway corridor. The natural landscape is richly varied with views of rivers, river valleys, agricultural fields, geologic outcrops, mesas, and mountains. The ecologic diversity is vast, ranging from Ponderosa forests and pinyon-juniper woodland to sagebrush shrub land and western slope grassland communities typically found in the arid Colorado southwest. According to the Navajo Lake State Park website:

...short-statured pinyon pine and Utah juniper trees with an understory of shrubs and grasses comprise the pinyon-juniper woodland community, occupying dry slopes, hills and mesa tops. Common understory plant species include Gambel oak, big sagebrush, Indian ricegrass, western wheatgrass, galleta and blue grama. The sagebrush shrubland community is dominated by big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, Gambel oak and skunkbrush sumac. This shrub community occupies more mesic slopes and provides understory for the pinyon-juniper community. Western slope grasslands support the sod-forming blue grama, galleta and western wheatgrass, and the bunchgrasses Indian ricegrass, needle-and-thread grass and Junegrass. Wetland, riparian and aquatic plant communities have become established around the reservoir, in the San Juan and Piedra river valleys above the reservoir and on ground water seeps.

“This is truly a unique area with an amazing richness of rare fauna and flora well worth preserving for future generations.” - *Upper San Juan Basin Biological Assessment report prepared for the Southwest Land Alliance by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) at Colorado State University (2003).*

There are several extremely rare plants and animals that depend on this area for the survival of their species. According to the report cited above by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), 31 rare or imperiled plant species, 14 animal species, and 42 plant communities of concern have been documented in the Upper San Juan Basin. Of these, 10 plant species and two animal species were recorded for the first time in the CNHP database for the Basin including one plant, the Pagosa gilia, known only from three locations in the world, all in Archuleta County.

## WILDLIFE

Travelers on the Tracks Across Borders Byway have an opportunity to view, encounter and learn about an abundant variety of native wildlife found throughout the multiple ecosystems along the route. From the federally endangered Colorado pikeminnow and rare river otters to mountain bobcat and Peregrine falcons, the list of wildlife is

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extensive. Ornithologists and hobbyist bird watchers will discover herons, hawks, eagles, migrating birds, song birds, Canada geese, cliff swallows and owls among the myriad bird community. Conservationists will appreciate the comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy developed for the San Juan River watershed. The southern Rocky Mountains are home to many plant species and alpine ecosystems not found elsewhere in the United States.

At Navajo State Park, the Watchable Wildlife Viewing Area is located next to the narrow gauge railroad bridge over the Piedra River near Colorado Highway 151. This accessible facility is an outstanding location to view wildlife of the park. Many migratory and resident birds are known for this area including several species of raptors, pinyon jay, black-billed magpie, common raven, and waterfowl and shorebirds which are attracted to the reservoir. Mule deer are a common sight, as are cottontail rabbit, coyote, red fox, porcupine, striped skunk and ground squirrel. Rare wildlife species present include the river otter, which has been reintroduced to the Piedra River, the bald eagle, and the white pelican, a summer resident. Anglers are attracted by the warm and cold-water fishing opportunities, which include large-mouth and small-mouth bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, northern pike, rainbow trout and kokanee salmon.

One unique wildlife discovery is the endangered Colorado pikeminnow, once referred to as the “Behemoths of the San Juan.” According to the Nature Conservancy’s website:

*...The San Juan River once supported six-foot long, 100-pound Colorado pikeminnows (Ptychocheilus lucius) and five-foot razorback suckers. ...the Colorado pikeminnow is the largest minnow in North America and is an endangered, native fish of the Colorado and San Juan rivers thought to have evolved more than 3 million years ago. These fish can live up to 40 years and were historically known to grow to nearly 6 feet long and weigh 80 pounds. Today, adults are seen from two-three feet in length. Historically called the “white salmon” by early settlers due to its migratory behavior, the Colorado pikeminnow has a torpedo-shaped body and a large, toothless mouth. Dam construction, water diversions and non-native species arrived, and these “behemoths of the San Juan” dwindled to a few half-pints. In 2011, the Nature Conservancy joined several state, federal and Native American partners in a comprehensive effort to restore the San Juan River, a major waterway of the Colorado River Basin and home to unique native fish. The San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program continues to stock Colorado pikeminnow to develop a separate, self-sustaining population. Young Colorado pikeminnow were listed as endangered by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1967 and given full protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. They were also listed as endangered under Colorado law in 1976 with their status changed to threatened in 1998.*

At Chimney Rock National Monument, a wide variety of wildlife has been documented including Black bear, mountain bobcat, mule deer, elk, red fox, prairie dog, reptiles

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including rattlesnakes and horned lizards, and dozens of birds including hummingbirds, songbirds, woodpeckers and raptors such as turkey vultures and Peregrine falcons.

In New Mexico on Jicarilla Apache National lands, the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department is highly engaged in wildlife management through hunting, fishing and camping permits. Registered Jicarilla Apache Tribal Member Guides are required to accompany hunters. The Navajo River is a tributary of the San Juan River; the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department is working on habitat restoration and protection of three rare native fish populations.

### **CULTURAL OR ETHNIC FEATURES**

La Plata and Archuleta Counties are dynamic and multicultural communities that includes Native Americans, Latino and Anglo peoples, among others. They boast festivals and events of all these cultures, which are enthusiastically enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike.

Downtown Durango has long embraced its unique architectural significance within the context of economic development. The Durango cultural heritage and arts scene is a significant economic driver in the region with vibrant and varied music, museums, artists, dance, film, photography and fine local crafts. The Main Street revitalization movement in Colorado owes much of its early success to Durango's historic commercial district revitalization efforts. A 12,000 square foot museum of the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad was created in 1998 utilizing eight stalls of the 'new' 15-stall roundhouse built in 1989. Many families and former railroad workers have donated or provided artifacts that tell the history of railroading, especially from the Denver & Rio Grande Western line.

#### Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)

The Ute people are among the oldest residents of Colorado, inhabiting the mountains and vast areas of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Eastern Nevada, Northern New Mexico and Arizona. According to tribal history handed down from generation to generation, Ute people have lived here since the beginning of time.

Prior to acquiring the horse, the Utes lived off the land establishing a unique relationship with the ecosystem. They would travel and camp in familiar sites and use well established routes such as the Ute Trail that can still be seen in the forests of the Grand Mesa, and the forerunner of the scenic highway traversing through South Park, and Cascade, Colorado.

The Southern Ute Tribe has approximately 1,400 tribal members, with half the population under the age of 30. The Southern Ute Reservation is situated on a 1,125 square mile (681,000 acres) reservation. The tribe is governed by a seven member Tribal Council elected by the membership. Principle officers include the Chairman,

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Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, with all council members serving three-year staggered terms. Tribal government is based on a Tribal Constitution adopted November 4, 1936, that was revised in September 1975. Although the tribe strives to provide strong social welfare and education programs, they also emphasize the importance of the traditional way of life. They sponsor the Bear dance and the annual mid-summer Sun Dance which is the most important spiritual ceremony in the Ute community. Tribal members of all ages participate in Pow-wows. The Bear Dance in the spring and the late-summer Fair Pow-wow are open to the public. Tribal Council recognized the importance of traditional healing and has incorporated this method into the health services program.

Tribal government includes the Executive staff (Tribal Council, Executive Officers and support staff), administrative personal, natural resources, education, utilities, judicial branch, health and social services, a culture department, and many more departments. In August 2000, the Southern Ute Tribal Academy opened and in 2001, the Sun Ute Community Center opened its doors.

The Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum Permanent Gallery in Ignacio tells the story of the Southern Ute Tribe from the earliest times to the present day. Arranged as a circulating, self-guided tour, visitors start at the Circle of Life Theater for an introductory 360 degree experience, journey past Rock Art and a full-size teepee, past glorious ceremonial dress, through a replica house and schoolroom, and out via a rodeo experience to an exhibit that shows how the Southern Ute live today. (*Extensive Ute history information is found at <https://www.southernute-nsn.gov/history/>*)

### The Jicarilla Apache Nation in New Mexico

There are approximately 2,755 tribal members of the Jicarilla Apache Nation, most of whom live in the town and tribal capital of Dulce. Migrating from Canada to the American southwest between A.D. 1300 and 1500, they settled in a region of 50 million acres spreading across southern Colorado, northern New Mexico and western Oklahoma. Nomadic in nature until just before European contact, the Jicarilla tribe established trade with Taos and Picurís pueblos. They wandered and traded as far east as Kansas until they settled deep in the northern Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the mid-1720s. The Jicarillas are widely acclaimed for the beauty and excellent craftsmanship of their traditional basket-making, beadwork and micaceous clay pottery. The name “Jicarilla” comes from a Spanish word generally defined as “little basket maker.” The Jicarilla Arts and Crafts Shop Museum in Dulce displays and sells beautiful Jicarilla beadwork, baskets, paintings and ribbon shirts. Publically accessible cultural events include Go-Jii-Ya Feast Day in mid-September, the Stone Lake Fiesta and July's Little Beaver Roundup.

## RECREATIONAL

Dozens of recreational opportunities exist throughout the Byway corridor. Durango is a rich hub of recreational activities for every age, interest and ability level. Walking, biking, hiking, climbing, jeep tours, river sports, winter sports, and recreational facilities

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are in abundant supply. In Ignacio, the Sun Ute Community Center is a 50,000 sq. ft. state of the art recreational facility open to the public – and includes a pool, gymnasium, weight and cardio-workout facility, trails, softball/baseball field, outdoor playground and an archery range.

Navajo State Park is marketed as “Colorado's Answer to Lake Powell.” The reservoir extends for 20 miles south into New Mexico. Boaters and campers enjoy the park year-round. Sailors, houseboaters and other power boaters cruise some of the 15,000 surface-acres of the reservoir. Daily and seasonal slip and mooring ball rentals, boat rentals and gasoline for boats are available at the park’s Two Rivers Marina. 138 campsites are available and most are open year-round. Fishing enthusiasts catch crappie, large-mouth and small-mouth bass, northern pike, trout, bluegill and catfish in the reservoir.

Chimney Rock National Monument currently features recreational opportunities including archaeological visitation, astronomical and geological interpretation activities, hiking, bicycling, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Off-road use of motorized vehicles is currently prohibited.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe allows recreational boaters (private and commercial) to float through tribal portions of navigable rivers that traverse the Southern Ute Reservation, including the Animas River and San Juan River above Navajo Reservoir. Boating access *does not include* put-in or take-out on tribal land, passage along tribal streambeds or banks, nor commercial guiding and outfitting of fishermen while on tribal water. Recreational boaters floating through the Southern Ute Reservation generally need to arrange take-out permission from private landowners, since public lands along the river corridors are highly limited and take-out on tribal land is not allowed. The Tribe offers one exception to the put-in / take-out restriction, as follows: Fishermen who have a valid tribal fishing permit and who are engaged in fishing may put-in or take-out small, portable craft on tribal lands. Portable craft are those that can be carried by hand to and from the river, but do not include boats that must be trailered into or out of the river. All forms of outdoor recreation on Southern Ute tribal lands, other than approved non-member hunting and fishing, is generally limited to enrolled Southern Ute tribal members, their immediate family (i.e., mother, father, siblings, children), and guests of enrolled tribal members. Tribal members and authorized non-members must follow general land use restrictions that have been established through the Southern Ute Department of Natural Resources / Lands Division, including permission requirements for crossing tribal land assignments and allotments.

In New Mexico, the Jicarilla Apache tribe maintains the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department, a large hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation operation. The Jicarilla Apache reservation features hunting of some of the largest mule deer on the continent.

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## **SECTION B. THE PROPOSED SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAY MUST BE SUITABLE FOR THE PRESCRIBED TYPE(S) OF VEHICULAR USE.**

*Describe road surface type, surface condition, roadway widths, grade conditions, traffic capacity, and provide accident statistics where available. Describe the type of vehicle best suited for travel on the route. For example, a narrow, winding, steep, dirt road with rocks and uneven surfaces would best be suited for 4 wheel drive vehicles, not recreational vehicles (RV) or passenger cars. It is especially important to stress whether or not a road is suitable for RV traffic due to the difficulty in maneuvering these vehicles on narrow, steep roads.*

Road conditions along the 124.5 mile Byway vary from high speed four-lane paved state highways to graded gravel and earthen surfaces. The earthen portion is approximately 15' wide, suitable for a high-clearance 4-wheel drive and extends for approximately 10 miles, 4.3 of which is in Colorado. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is working with both SUIT and the Jicarilla Apache Nation to upgrade this section of the road on both side of the border. In Colorado, funding is in place and planning is being undertaken so that in the near future the road will be more passable in all weather conditions. Progress on the New Mexico side has not been reported to the nomination team. For the paved portions between Durango and Navajo Lake State Park and again in New Mexico from Navajo to Chama, passenger cars are well suited. SUVs are suitable for the entire route with the possible exception of the center 10 mile portion, which is earthen and may become extremely muddy, slick and impassable during very wet conditions. This more primitive road surface will appeal to the avid backroads traveler; posted warning/notification signs will be required at key entry points to the Byway. The terrain is relatively level with gradual elevation gains and some modest hills.

### Road Facts at a Glance:

Total miles = 124.5

Total miles in Colorado = 89.8 (including 22.2 miles route trip spur to Chimney Rock National Monument)

Total miles in New Mexico = 34.7

Total paved road surface = 94.7

Total gravel or dirt road = 29.8 miles

### Byway mileages and surface conditions per segment:

Travelling west to east:

Local Durango Streets and US HWY 160 from Durango & Silverton Depot to Colorado Highway 172 = 7.8 miles (all paved)

Colorado Highway 172 to Ignacio = 13.7 miles (all paved). (Note: The intersection of Colorado State Highways 151 and 172 in Ignacio has a high traffic count for a non-signalized intersection. A signal has been proposed.

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Colorado Highway 151 from Ignacio to Navajo Lake and Archuleta County Road 500 = 21.5 miles (all paved)

Colorado Highway 151 from Navajo Lake to Chimney Rock National Monument Visitor Center = 22.2 round trip miles (all paved)

Archuleta County Road 500 from Navajo Lake to the junction with Archuleta County Road 551 = 20 miles (graded, gravel road treated for dust and mud reduction – 24' wide)

Archuleta County Road 551/Southern Ute 169 to State Line (and change of road name to Jicarilla 9) = about 4.3 miles (about a mile of graded two lane road and the remaining distance is earthen with some gravel; approximately 15' wide.)

Jicarilla 9 to Navajo is an earthen road = about 5.2 miles; and paved road from Navajo, through Dulce (where it joins New Mexico Highway 64) to the intersection with New Mexico Highway 84 = 17.3 miles

New Mexico Highway 84 to downtown Chama = 2.2 miles

*(Note: An alternative route on the Colorado side through the town of Falfa to Arboles may be particularly appealing to the railroad enthusiast due to its closer proximity to the historic railroad grade. This fully-paved, public roads route includes a view of the historic Florida (pronounced floor-EE-dah) trestle and view of the culturally-significant agricultural villages of Tiffany and Allison on the approach to Ignacio. This optional route has not been calculated into the total mileage count, though could be included in the byway's marketing materials.)*

## Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts

ADTs were done on SUIT Route 169 in 2006 (no exact date known) showing 29 vehicles on 4.3 miles. Of the 21.4 miles of County Road 500 from Juanita to Route 151, ADTs done in 2005 ranging between 53 to 154 vehicles; however, there is no indication on the report as to when the counts were taken and why two.

## Accident Reports

No known accident reports for County Road 500 or Southern Ute 169 exist with the SUIT road department. Other accident counts have yet to be obtained for the remaining route.

## Southern Ute 169 (center of the Byway, earthen portion)

This section of the Byway has been in the design stage for upgrading from earthen to graded gravel with about 60% of the work complete. Right-of-Way issues need to be worked through between the BIA and SUIT in order to determine what the construction

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limits will be. The easement must be granted to BIA as they are required to comply with all federal environmental assessment requirements before construction begins under a 638 contract agreement.

### **SECTION C: THE PROPOSED SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAY MUST BE AN EXISTING ROUTE AND HAVE LEGAL PUBLIC ACCESS.**

The proposed Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway is located 100% on publicly accessible roads of state, county and federal/BIA designation.

In Colorado, the route begins in downtown Durango then along State Highway 160 following the Animas River, then branches southeast along State Highway 172 to Ignacio where it connects to State Highway 151 and continues through Arboles to Navajo Lake State Park. Here at the intersection of Archuleta County Road 500 along the San Juan River, the route includes a round-trip spur northeast on State Highway 151 into the San Juan National Forest to the Chimney Rock National Monument Visitor Center. Returning south along State Highway 151, travelers turn east at the Archuleta County Road 500 intersection and largely across Southern Ute tribal lands through Pagosa Junction and Juanita. At Juanita, the 4.3 mile county route is also known as Southern Ute 169 and continues to the New Mexico border, where it connects to Jicarilla Apache Nation in Rio Arriba County.

**In New Mexico, from the state border southeast to Dulce, the route is already a designated New Mexico Scenic Byway, known as the Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway.** No crossing permits are required by the Jicarilla Apache Nation. From Dulce to Chama, the proposed route would extend the existing byway (on state highways 64 and 84) across the Continental Divide to downtown Chama at the depot and the southern terminus of the Cumbres & Toltec Narrow Gauge Scenic Railroad.

#### SUIT Crossing Permits:

A portion of the byway crosses Southern Ute Indian Tribe land and is managed through the Lands Technicians/Permits and Rights-of-Way Coordinators at (970) 563-0126. According to Jim E. Formea, Permits and Rights-of-Way Coordinator, **a crossing permit is NOT required for individuals whose purpose is to experience the byway route by driving completely within the confines of the county-maintained roadway.** Period stops within the roadway confines are permitted for photos and viewing provided drivers use common sense and courtesy to pull to the side of the road where practical – and NOT cross the boundary between the roadway and tribal land, except as noted below. These boundaries are not readily obvious in most places; therefore, a byway driver experiencing the corridor between the Colorado/New Mexico border and the intersection of County Road 500 and State Highway 151, must assume the corridor is within tribal lands and therefore be respectful and adhere crossing regulations.

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Crossing permits are needed to allow entities to cross Tribal land for all purposes such as hunting, camping, hiking or conducting business on and/or off Tribal Land, or temporary access to private or public land. Permits are only valid for the purposes and locations stated on the permit. The permit does not allow entities to be on Tribal land for any activities that have not been otherwise authorized by the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Not doing so may result in cause for revocation of the permit. Daily, weekly, monthly and annual fees are required for all vehicles except those associated with Tribal Member Business. All marketing materials and social media sites will prominently include information regarding how to obtain SUIT Crossing Permits and the requirements/responsibilities they carry.

*\*Complete crossing permit details and access to request forms are found through this link to the SUIT website: <https://www.southernute-nsn.gov/natural-resources/lands/crossing-permit/>. All marketing materials and social media sites will prominently include information regarding how to obtain SUIT Crossing Permits and the requirements/responsibilities they carry.*

### Accessibility to Services:

Full traveler services including food, fuel, auto-repair, lodging and sanitary facilities are available in Durango (population 16,000), the La Plata County seat, where it connects with the San Juan Historic Scenic and Historic Byway. Durango is a scenic and economically vibrant year-round small city and the principal hub community of the Byway. Long known as a visitor destination, Durango's historic downtown offers fine dining and restaurants, shopping, and live entertainment. The Durango Welcome Center at 8<sup>th</sup> and Main streets provides readily accessible visitor information. Durango is the southern terminus of the world famous Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad.

Full traveler services are also available in Ignacio (population 800), headquarters to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. This small, walkable community has many locally owned businesses as well as the Sky Ute Casino Resort with 140 luxury rooms, eight culturally-themed suites and a wide variety of guest services including spa and salon, fitness center and dining options. The Resort also offers RV camping, gaming, dining, meetings and banquets, entertainment, concerts, boxing, bowling and events.

Eating establishments and a convenience store are available in Arboles adjacent to Navajo State Park which is open year round, featuring 137 campsites – 97 are winterized, 40 include full hookups and 40 include electricity only. Three cabins are also available. The waterfront Park also has a central picnic area with BBQ grills and laundry facilities. No services exist east of Navajo State Park until Dulce, New Mexico. Travelers will be advised to pack accordingly. Full traveler services are also available in Dulce and Chama, New Mexico.

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## **D. THE PROPOSED SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAY MUST HAVE STRONG LOCAL SUPPORT AND PROPONENTS MUST DEMONSTRATE COORDINATION WITH RELEVANT AGENCIES.**

The visionaries behind the Tracks Across Borders Byway wholeheartedly concur that the success and on-going management of the corridor requires a diverse, devoted and collaborative leadership core. Over 100 individuals are included in the Byway contact list. During the early conceptual stages of this Byway project, a 30 member Steering Committee was formed to provide leadership, guidance and feedback on the Byway planning process. Members represented every major group, organization, association, business and government/tribal entity touched by the Byway – in both states. Three meetings were held from September to December 2013 during which time “Direction, Goals and Objectives” were developed. These are outlined in the Conceptual Plan. The preliminary Vision Statement developed by the Byway Steering Committee at the November 6, 2013 meeting is:

*The Byway provides a unique adventure on paved and back roads. The Byway offers opportunities to enjoy, learn about and appreciate the natural and cultural history of the sovereign nations of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and of northwestern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado.*

From that Steering Committee, a smaller working group emerged to largely spearhead work going forward, including:

- Rick Routh, Director, Traffic and Safety, Region V, CDOT\*
- Lena Atencio, Director, National Resources Department, SUIT
- Doug Secrist, Manager, Navajo Lake State Park
- Scott Flury, Marketing Director for the Apache Nugget Corporation and member of the Chama Town Council\*
- Vickie Begay, Roads Engineer, BIA/SUIT\*
- Beth Lamberson, Fundraising Development Director, Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum
- Grace Sheppard, Director, Group Sales, Durango Area Tourism Office\*
- Cassandra Naranjo, NAGPRA Director, SUIT\*

*(\* Joined on the Byway driving tour in June 2014)*

The Steering Committee anticipates the governing board of the local byway commission to also consist of representatives from the following:

Colorado:

- Durango Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
- City of Durango/Durango Area Tourism Office
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
- Navajo Lake State Park
- Chimney Rock National Monument

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- Archuleta County
- LaPlata County

## New Mexico

- Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Chama
- Rio Arriba County

## SUIT involvement

Approximately two thirds of the Tribe's 1,485 members live on or near the 681,000 acre reservation (1,125 square miles), through which a portion of the Byway traverses. Active representation from the Southern Utes has been assured through two letters of support. The tribe is governed by a seven member Tribal Council elected by the membership; an election is scheduled for Fall 2014 to replace the current acting Tribal Chief.

The Conceptual Plan component of this nominations discusses the people behind the Tracks Across Borders Byway, their leadership and the commission's structural plan.

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## **Description of the New Mexico's Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway**

(Source: <http://www.newmexico.org/narrow-gauge-trail/>)

*(Note: The 9.9 mile section of the two-state Tracks Across Borders Byway connects with the existing New-Mexico designated Scenic Byway – the Narrow Gauge – at the Colorado-New Mexico border. This Byway continues to the heart of Dulce.)*

The J-9 Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway has had many twists and turns, both literally and historically. This isolated road winds through a beautiful and dramatic landscape. It started as a primitive trail forged by early settlers and miners, and became a crude toll road in 1877. In the early 1800s, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad laid track on the same alignment. It has come full circle - the track has been removed and it is once again a largely unimproved road, now known as Jicarilla 9.

The D&RG Railway Company, incorporated in 1870, planned to lay track from Denver to El Paso, Texas and ultimately to Mexico City. Six branches would serve the booming silver mining areas of Colorado. Both the rough terrain and the cheaper cost of construction and operations led to the company's decision to use narrow gauge track, with rails laid three feet apart rather than the standard 4 feet 8.5 inches. Minimal grading was done in preparation for laying the track, and the line ran through narrow canyons and over steep grades.

In late 1881, the San Juan Branch was completed from Antonito to Durango, and from there to Farmington and Silverton, connecting the east and west sides of the Rocky Mountains. It served isolated farming and mining areas, transporting raw materials like timber and mineral ore,

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passengers, and tourists. After the silver boom ended in 1893, the freight shifted to agricultural products and timber milled by a Pagosa Springs lumber company. By 1915 the timber supply had nearly disappeared, and the company moved its operations to Dulce, a station on the San Juan Branch, where it built a new mill and company town in 1916.

In 1935 the San Juan Branch stopped operation for freight shipment completely, in 1951 it discontinued daily passenger service, and in 1968 it was abandoned between Chama and Durango. The Cumbres-Toltec (in Chama, 505-756-2151) and Durango-Silverton (888-872-4607 in Durango) lines, which continue in operation today as tourist lines, are all that remain of the San Juan Branch. It doesn't take a railroad buff to enjoy the sound of a steam engine and the rhythmic clack of wheels on the narrow gauge, and the mountain scenery is enchanting.

The greatest significance of this corridor today is the fact that it connects the sovereign nations of the Jicarilla Apache in New Mexico and the Southern Ute in Colorado. J-9 facilitates the exchange of commodities and religious and cultural heritage between the two tribes.

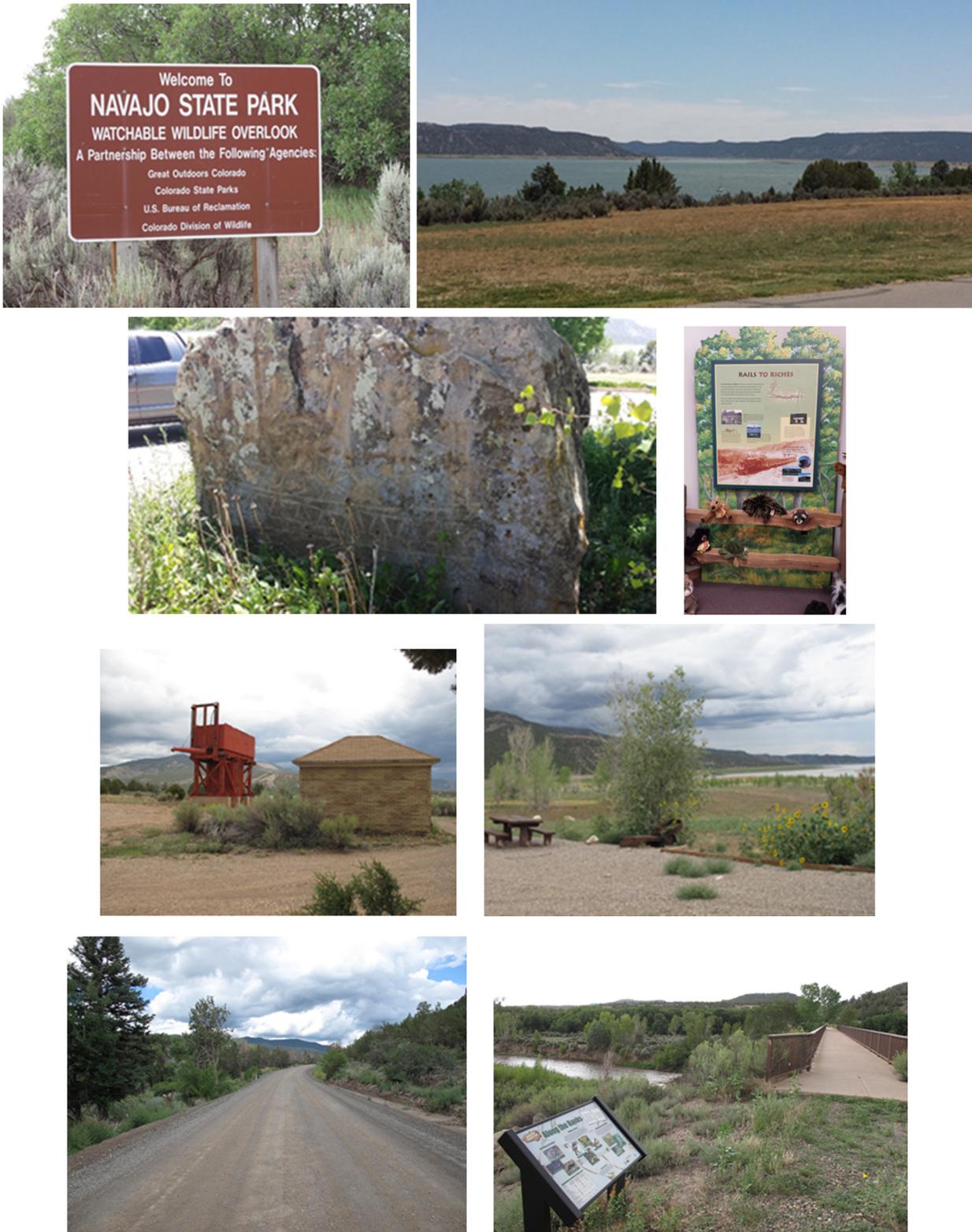
Two of the seven original Ute bands, the Mouache and Capote, make up the present day Southern Ute Indian Tribe. They reside on approximately 800,000 acres in southern Colorado. The Jicarilla Tribe consists of two bands: the Llaneros, or plains people, and the Olleros, or mountain valley people. They once roamed a large part of northeastern New Mexico and southern Colorado. In 1887, they were given a permanent reservation in north central New Mexico, which now encompasses one million acres.

J-9 now parallels or overlays about ten miles of the old railroad bed from Dulce northeast to the Colorado border. Most of the original track has been removed, but a short segment remains at the junction of US 64 and J-9 (called Narrow Gauge Street here) in Dulce. Two old D&RGW wooden boxcars are former stock cars used originally to haul cattle and sheep. These sit next to the Jicarilla Culture Center. Several yellow frame buildings with rust trim along the road in town were obviously associated with the D&RGW, but they have second careers as tribal administration buildings.

The canyon closes in on the paved road as it continues northwest alongside Amargo Creek. After about four miles, the pavement and the creek disappear. The station stop of Navajo was here at the confluence of Amargo Creek and the Navajo River. Still present to testify to the presence of busier times are a round yellow water tank with rust red roof and timber supports and a steel truss bridge across the river. A plaque on the bridge says that this was once the D&RGWRR Royal Gorge Route Scenic Line. Where tracks once were, planks were laid to allow cars over the bridge. It outlived even that use and has now been bypassed completely by a modern concrete bridge to the west. Fortunately, it has been allowed to remain, an elegant witness of earlier times.

Continuing north, the road narrows, and rock outcrops and tall pines loom down from either side. Horses have been seen grazing by the river. Riding in a train through these narrow, winding canyons must have been an adventure in the late 1800s. Traveling this road is still an adventure, even in the comfort of an automobile. ###

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*Navajo (Lake) State Park: Vista of reservoir, rock art monument at entrance to Visitor Center, interpretation panel inside Visitor Center (one of many), interpreted support structures for railroad, road surface conditions of Byway in this section, wildlife trail interpretive panels.*

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*Views of and from Pagosa Junction (Gato), former supply settlement for railroad and timber trade:*

*San Juan River valley vistas with triple trestle span*

*The 1927 Iglesia de San Juan church, sited prominently on a hillside overlooking the town out of the flood zone, is the third church for this community.*

*Currently, the church is privately maintained and is used on occasion for services and special events. It is owned by the Diocese in Pueblo and located just off tribal land and accessed via a gravel road.*

*The remaining structures of this settlement are disappearing through natural causes and vandalism.*

*One of two permitted access points on tribal lands leading to the San Juan River. The sign instructs that a SUIT crossing permit is required.*

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*Views of former settlement of Juanita: adobe walls of the former Juanita Catholic Church, mercantile and sheep ranching corral and barn. The settlement also includes the Juanita cemetery. The land is owned by the Navajo River Ranch*



This is the only sign, located just south of the Colorado-New Mexico state line, indicating a border crossing (state or tribal.)

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## Images of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad



*Antonito, Colorado depot and Chama, New Mexico depot*



*Railroad yard in Chama, New Mexico*