

# SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



## FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **May 22 - 24, 2013**

Destination: **Jemez Mountains**

Leader: **Brooks and Janice Taylor**    Number of Participants: **14**

Fourteen SJBAS members traveled to the Jemez Mountains to see a variety of petroglyphs, and sites occupied by those who left the Four Corners in the late 1300s. We were fortunate to tour the area before recent fires. The best sources of information for these late prehistoric and early historic sites is Michael Elliott, whom we hope we can get as an SJBAS speaker next year. He is an author of *Large Pueblo Sites Near Jemez Springs, NM*; *Overview and Synthesis of the Archeology of the Jemez Province, NM*; and *Archeological Investigations at Small Sites in the Jemez Mountains, NM*. After meeting in San Ysidro, on Wednesday, May 22, we visited Ojitos Wilderness and BLM rock art sites. Petroglyphs at our first stop, after a 1.25-mile hike, were etched into a flat surface several hundred feet above a small water course. Most memorable were the frog and turtle. At the second site, petroglyphs were on vertical walls with some scrambling required.

On the second day, the group visited the Paliza creek, Pechukwa, and Boletsakwa sites. Boletsakwa is a site of about 650 rooms, dating from 1350-1650, with most walls constructed out of shaped tuff masonry, which includes a great kiva, over 10 m. in diameter, on the east side, two smaller depressions indicating plaza kivas and probably three enclosed plazas. There appear to be two components: one early Jemez Phase, AD 1350-1500, and a Post-Pueblo Revolt component, AD 1680-1700+, as suggested by the architecture and ceramics. Spanish records indicate the Jemez people lived on mesa tops such as this after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Tree ring dates indicate a construction phase at this site from 1680-1683. Boletsakwa, probably one of the Jemez refuge sites, is located on a high narrow mesa between two very deep canyons. Vertical elevation is over 500' on both sides, at 7,240'. Soils on the mesa top could have supported "dry" farming. Semi-permanent streams flow through the canyons below. The bottomlands would have had more water, but were less defensible than the mesa top. The vegetation on top is a Ponderosa pine association. The architectural features of the site occupy about 5.5 acres.

Associated with Boletsakwa is the smaller pueblo, site 199, about 200 m. from the large site. Between the two sites is a large depression, possibly a reservoir or kiva. A larger reservoir with an earthen dam lies south of Boletsakwa. The cliffs, on the naturally protected location, are lined in some areas with low walls, possibly defensive. Also, along the cliffs are several bedrock grinding features and rock art. Boletsakwa has suffered fairly substantial pothunting. At the site there were petroglyphs both on horizontal slabs and short vertical faces below the slabs. We saw two intersecting walls making four corners with some interior chinking and plaster. On the second day, part of the group hiked also up to the Patokwa site, where sherds abounded, with ruins of a later Spanish mission, after a cooling Jemez Creek crossing.

On the third day, we traveled north to the southern edge of the Valles Caldera and then drove south on San Juan Mesa to view Seshukwa and sites 18 and 49 on a plateau and away from regular water sources. It was not obvious how the ancestral Indians obtained water for their crops or personal use. There are no nearby springs or creeks. The answer lies with relatively recent volcanic activity and the resultant soils. The El Cajete Volcano, just north of NM 4, erupted a large

amount of pumice over the Jemez Mountains about 55,000 years ago. Pumice is very light and flowed into gullies and small depressions. Pumice soils hold water from snow melts and monsoon rains and are ideal for agriculture in relatively arid areas. Pumice soils support dryland farming of crops and allow shallow wells to supply water for human use. Many of the ancient dwellings in the northern Jemez Mountains were near areas of pumice soils.

The third day, the group scrambled down to see rock art and viewed other rock art with binoculars. On Wednesday and Thursday nights we shared delicious appetizers in lieu of formal restaurant meals at two different forest campsites.

- Prepared by: Janice & Brooks Taylor, Bob Powell

Participants: Brooks and Janice Taylor, Linda and Pete Groth, Rhonda Raffo, Jim Mueller, MaryAnne Nelson, Susan Whitfield, Robert Powell, Richard Robinson, Gail and Marlo Schulz, Jim Shadell, Janice Sheftel

**jsheftel@mbsslip.com**, 970-247-1755, in order of interest of top 3 choices. (1) **CO Arch** (20 hrs); (2) **Prehistoric Lithic Description & Analysis** (20 hrs); (3) **Prehistoric Ceramic Description & Analysis** (20 hrs); (4) **Perishable Materials** (20 hrs); (5) **Arch. Dating Methods** (15 hrs); (6) **Field and Lab Photography** (15 hrs); (7) **Principles of Arch. Excavati**