



THE MOKI MESSENGER

January-February 2026
San Juan Basin Archaeological Society
sjbas.org

SJBAS Monthly Meeting: January 14

SJBAS Meeting – After a brief business meeting, we will have a presentation by Mario Borerro, FLC anthropology professor. Professor Borerro’s most recent work focused on Maya sites from southern Belize, Toledo District during the Classic to Postclassic time periods, primarily at the site of Nim li Punit (ball court shown to the right). His academic interests include the development of social complexity, lithic technology, domestic economies and the consumption/production decisions of people in the past. Mario uses several tools to investigate these issues including spatial (GIS), lithic, and geochemical analyses.

A reception starts things off at 6:30 p.m. in the Center of Southwest Studies foyer and the presentation begins at 7 PM in the Lyceum.



President's Message

I am grateful and honored to have been elected President of the San Juan Basin Archaeological Society on December 6. Thank you to the membership and Board for your confidence and trust. SJBAS has a long and respected history in the Four Corners region, and it is a privilege to help steward that legacy forward.

On a personal note, this role carries special meaning for me. My father, **Bruce Polich**, served as President of SJBAS for twelve years, from **1996 to 2008**. His long tenure reflected a deep commitment to archaeology, education, and the preservation of the cultural landscapes of the Southwest. To follow in his footsteps—while building on the work of many dedicated presidents and boards since—is inspiring.

I am also pleased to welcome **Andy Dennison** as our new Vice President. Andy brings experience, energy, and a collaborative spirit that will serve the Society well as we look ahead. I want to express my sincere appreciation to **all of our Board members**, whose continued participation, time, and thoughtful leadership sustain this organization. Your willingness to serve—often quietly and behind the scenes—is what allows SJBAS to offer lectures, field trips, publications, and outreach that benefit both our members and the broader community.

Together with the Board, we are beginning work on a three-year plan that will help guide our priorities, lectures, and programs. In the coming months, you will see renewed emphasis on several core areas: growing and engaging our membership, expanding student participation—especially through our strong connection with Fort Lewis College—strengthening our lecture series, and offering more frequent and diverse field trips. Just as important, we intend to sharpen our role as advocates and stewards of the archaeological and cultural landscapes of the desert Four Corners region. Education, access, and responsible preservation remain at the heart of who we are.

SJBAS thrives because of its members—your curiosity, your volunteerism, and your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences. I encourage you to become involved, bring new folks with you, and help us think creatively about how we can reach broader and younger audiences while honoring professional standards and ethical stewardship.

Please join us for our upcoming **Board Meeting on January 15, 2026**. The meeting is open to all members, and your participation and ideas are always welcome.

Thank you again for your support. I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Thomas Polich
President, San Juan Basin Archaeological Society

Dues Due

Just a gentle reminder that 2026 annual dues for SJBAS are due by the last day of January. Go to the [membership form](#) to print out a renewal. We need your support as do the students whose internships we fund. Thanks!!

SJBAS Annual Holiday Brunch Elects New Leadership, Reviews the Year and Hears Talk by CSWS Intern

The annual holiday brunch brought together new and seasoned members to vote on Society officers and learn how their membership dues support interns and research at the Center of Southwest Studies. In addition, slide shows highlighted 2025 trips and speakers and we also had a sneak peak at the 2026 calendar.



SJBAS held annual officer elections: Thomas Polich will be our new president with Andy Dennison as our new Vice President. Susan Hicks continues as Secretary and Mary Moorhead as Treasurer. Votes were unanimous among the members present.

Amy Cao, Collections Manager at CSWS, then introduced Leah Pascarella, who just completed an internship supported by SJBAS membership dues. Leah is graduating with a BA in anthropology and environmental conservation and management with a GIS certificate. Her research has been on the Fort Louis, college anthropology, collections as exhibit preparation, archives organization, inventory database organization, and she also has served on the Texas Parks and wildlife natural resource management intern a lot of her work was based on the Los Ojitos, New Mexico site. She also worked with a 480 glass item collection. The John W. Sanders Internship and Education Fund this year will support the work of FLC anthropology major Macy Robinson. More on Macy and her internship in a forthcoming issue.

The program also included heartfelt appreciation for the leadership of Paul Landrum the past three years, serving as both president and vice president, and managed

difficult times as SJBAS navigated a morphing relationship with the BLM in Bears Ears National Monument.

Mary Morehead reports we took in over \$600 from the silent auction; all to be used to support the John Sanders Educational Fund.

Lastly, there was a round of applause for an event well-planned by Tammie and Joel Barger. And to Tish Varney for years of make-a-difference membership chairmanship.

--*Photos by Joel Barger and Hunter*

Briefs

Susan Hicks is organizing a 3-day trip to Zuni Pueblo for April 24th - April 27th. She will pin down details in January but needs an idea of how many members would participate.

“Zuni Pueblo is the largest of the nineteen New Mexican Pueblos, covering more than 400,000 total combined acreages (not including other sites) and with an enrolled population of over 20,000. They are considered the most traditional of all the New Mexico Pueblos.” You may learn more [here](#).

This 3-day trip will include archaeological and cultural tours led by members of the Zuni Tribe. There is lodging at the Inn of Halona in Zuni (they have 12 rooms) or there is camping at El Morro National Monument which is 32 miles from Zuni.

In 2019, the last time SJBAS did a trip to Zuni, the cost for the tours was approximately \$110 + tips (they are optional but customary).

Please email Susan at sjbashicks@gmail.com to let her know if you would like to sign up for this trip. There is a limit of 16 people. I will keep a waiting list if needed. Also, a reminder that you must be an SJBAS member to sign up.

New member orientation scheduled for February 11. Tish Varney will talk about SJBAS’s mission and the role and benefits for new members. You’ll also meet the board members.

Upcoming SJBAS Events for 2026

[Contact trip organizers for details.
See sjbas.org for the latest version of the full-year calendar.
Dates and event descriptions may change]

January 14	SJBAS Meeting – FLC Professor Mario Borerro will talk about “The Ancient Maya from a Frontier Perspective.” 7 PM, Center of SW Studies
January 21	Backroom Tour of the Collections at the Mesa Verde Research Center. Contact Lorie Hansen at Lmhansen39@gmail.com . This day- trip is full but a wait list is being maintained.

February 11	Orientation for new members-- This is your chance to learn about the benefits of being a member and how your membership supports local archaeology education. 6:15 PM in the Lyceum at FLC. Just prior to the February monthly meeting.
February 11	SJBAS Meeting — “New Data, Old Questions: Ancient DNA and the Archaeology of Northwest Mexico and the US Southwest.” This is a presentation by Jakob Sedig, a Senior Archaeologist with Chronicle Heritage. 7:00 Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
Mid-February	Ohkay Owingeh Deer Dance plus Jemez Pueblo, Coronado Historic Site and various Santa Fe sites. Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
March 11	SJBAS Meeting—Speaker TBA. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
March	Southern Ute Cultural Center Tour. Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
April 8	SJBAS Meeting — Angela Huster of Chronicle Heritage will talk about “The Hohokam Culture of Southern Arizona.” 7:00 Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
April 24-27	Zuni Pueblo Tour. Contact Susan Hicks at sc53hicks@gmail.com .
Early May TBA	Champagne Spring dig (Dove Creek). Contact Thomas Polich at thomas.polich@gmail.com
May TBA	Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Service Day, contact thomas.polich@gmail.com
May 13	SJBAS Meeting — “Continental-scale faunal exchange event with Eurasia that produced the African fauna we know today.” This talk is by Dr. John Kappelman, emeritus professor at the University of Texas, Austin. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
June TBA	Goodman Point Day Trip, Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
June 23-25	Ohkay Owingeh Feast Day plus Rancho de las Golondrinas, Poushe Ohwinghe and Puye Cliffs, Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
July 8	SJBAS Meeting — “Overall history of the people who created Chaco: Where they came from, their ascendance into what has been called <i>The Chaco Phenomenon</i> , the subsequent decline, and where they have gone.” A presentation by former NPS Ranger GB Cornucopia. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
August 6-9	Pecos Conference, Mancos. Contact Rusty Chamberlain at chambrke@aol.com .
August 12	SJBAS Meeting — “Archaeology of Andean South America,” a presentation by James Davenport, University of Missouri Anthropology Department. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
September TBA	Nine Mile Canyon Tour, Contact Thomas Polich at thomas.polich@gmail.com

September 9	SJBAS Meeting —“The Organization of Labor at Betatakin and Keet Seel,” a presentation by Katie Williams, Crow Canyon. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
September TBA	Aztec Ruins National Monument Cultural Day , Contact Susan Hicks at sc53hicks@gmail.com .
October 14	SJBAS Meeting —“Late Middle Archaic and Early Agricultural Period in Southern Arizona: Materials from McEuen Cave,” presented by Joseph Birkmann, University of New Mexico. This cave in Northeast Arizona has produced some of the oldest maize and squash in the region. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.
November 11	SJBAS Meeting—Speaker TBA. 7:00 PM Lyceum at Center of Southwest Studies.

Educational Opportunities on Southwest Archaeology

As Compiled by Betsy Moore, SJBAS PAAC Coordinator
 [If not offered nearby they can be seen on Zoom]

January 19 – April 22	“ Archaeology of the Southwest ,” a 14-session online course offered by Old Pueblo Archaeology. There is a suggested donation of \$109 due by January 19. Sessions are recorded for later playback. You may obtain more information here .
April 4	“ From Rocks to Tools: Basic Lithic Analysis Workshop ,” put on by Sarah A. Allaun, Assistant State Archaeologist, Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. This is an in-person, day-long workshop. Free and to be held at the Center of Southwest Studies. More information is here .

SJBAS Elected Officers and Board Members

President	Thomas Polich
Vice President	Andy Dennison
Secretary	Susan Hicks
Treasurer	Mary Moorehead

Communications chair	Byron Kellogg
Membership chair	Tish Varney
Field Trip Program coordinator	Rusty Chamberlain
Education/PAAC representative	Betsy Moore
<i>Moki Messenger</i> editor	Hunter McCleary
Programming chair	Janice Sheftel
Publicity chair	Rusty Chamberlain
Social chair	Tammie and Joel Barger
Webmaster	Lyle Hancock

SJBAS Membership renewals are due by January 31st each year. Individual dues drop to \$15 after June 30. To renew your membership, please complete the SJBAS Annual Membership Form, make your check for \$25 (\$50 family, \$10 student) payable to "SJBAS" and mail with the printed Annual Membership Form only to: SJBAS, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 3153, Durango, CO 81302.

If you would like to join SJBAS or need to renew a lapsed membership, just print and complete the Annual Membership Form; sign the membership form, Liability Waiver and Proper Etiquette forms; write a check payable to "SJBAS" for the appropriate amount; and mail the Annual Membership Form, the signed liability form and your check to our Chapter Treasurer. Please keep your signed *Proper Etiquette forms* for your records.