

# New Mexican skies protected with Dark Sky Park designation

September 2 2013

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"Milky Way, Fajada Butte." Credit: Stan Honda

The 34,000-acre Chaco Culture National Historical Park is home to

many ancient wonders including the remains of a civilization that thrived over 1,000 years ago. The park, which has been protecting its archaeological riches since it was established in 1907, is now protecting its views of the starry skies too. It has just been named as the International Dark-Sky Association's newest Dark Sky Park.

"Once the night sky was something that was very much a part of the human experience at Chaco and around the globe," says IDA Executive Director Bob Parks. "We are delighted that Chaco is now preserving the nighttime environment alongside their historic treasures."

As a Gold-tier IDA Dark Sky Park, Chaco has shown its commitment to preserving its near-pristine night skies. The park has adopted a set of strict lighting guidelines that include the use of dark-sky friendly lighting now and in the future, ensuring that it will do its part to keep the nighttime environment natural and unspoiled for generations to come.

The park is also exemplary in its public outreach efforts, holding numerous educational programs and events. Upcoming will be the Chaco Canyon Star Party on October 5 that will include a formal public dedication of their new IDA Dark Sky Park designation. The event will feature guest speakers, dark sky preservation messaging, and special interpretive programs, along with stargazing opportunities throughout the evenings. A commemorative poster will be given away to visitors during the event.

Other regular park events include "Archaeoastronomy of Chaco," "Public Telescope Viewing," "Pueblo Bonito Full Moon Walks," and "Campfire Astronomy." Special events are also held celebrating [astronomical events](#) such as eclipses and [meteor showers](#).

Chaco Culture National Historic Park superintendent Larry Turk feels strongly about the designation. "Standing at one of the park's 4,000

prehistoric archeological sites, one can easily imagine another human centuries earlier gazing awestruck into the same universe while surrounded by ecosystems that have adapted to the natural rhythms of the moon and stars," said Turk.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park joins eleven other parks scattered about the globe that have been recognized by IDA for their efforts in night sky preservation.



## About the IDA Dark Sky Places Program

IDA established the International Dark Sky Places conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on stringent outdoor lighting standards and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, four communities, twelve parks and five reserves have also received International Dark Sky designations.

**More information:** Learn more at [www.darksky.org/parks](http://www.darksky.org/parks) and about Chaco Culture National Historic Preserve at [www.nps.gov/chcu](http://www.nps.gov/chcu)

Provided by International Dark-Sky Association

Citation: New Mexican skies protected with Dark Sky Park designation (2013, September 2) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-mexican-dark-sky.html>

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