

# FIELD STUDIO: BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

## *Exhibits, Interactives, and Furniture*

*ABSTRACT: The Field Studio is a platform for collaborative practice engaging faculty, students, organizational partners and the broader community. The studio focuses on so-called Public Lands and the rural towns in close proximity. In this featured project, the studio worked with Bears Ears Partnership to design and build components for the Outdoor Classroom at the Bears Ears Educational Center in Bluff, Utah. We worked with partners in the community, local NGOs and Federal and Tribal governing bodies of the Bears Ears National Monument. The project includes educational exhibits, furnishings, and interactive activities for local k-12 children and visitors to the BEEC.*





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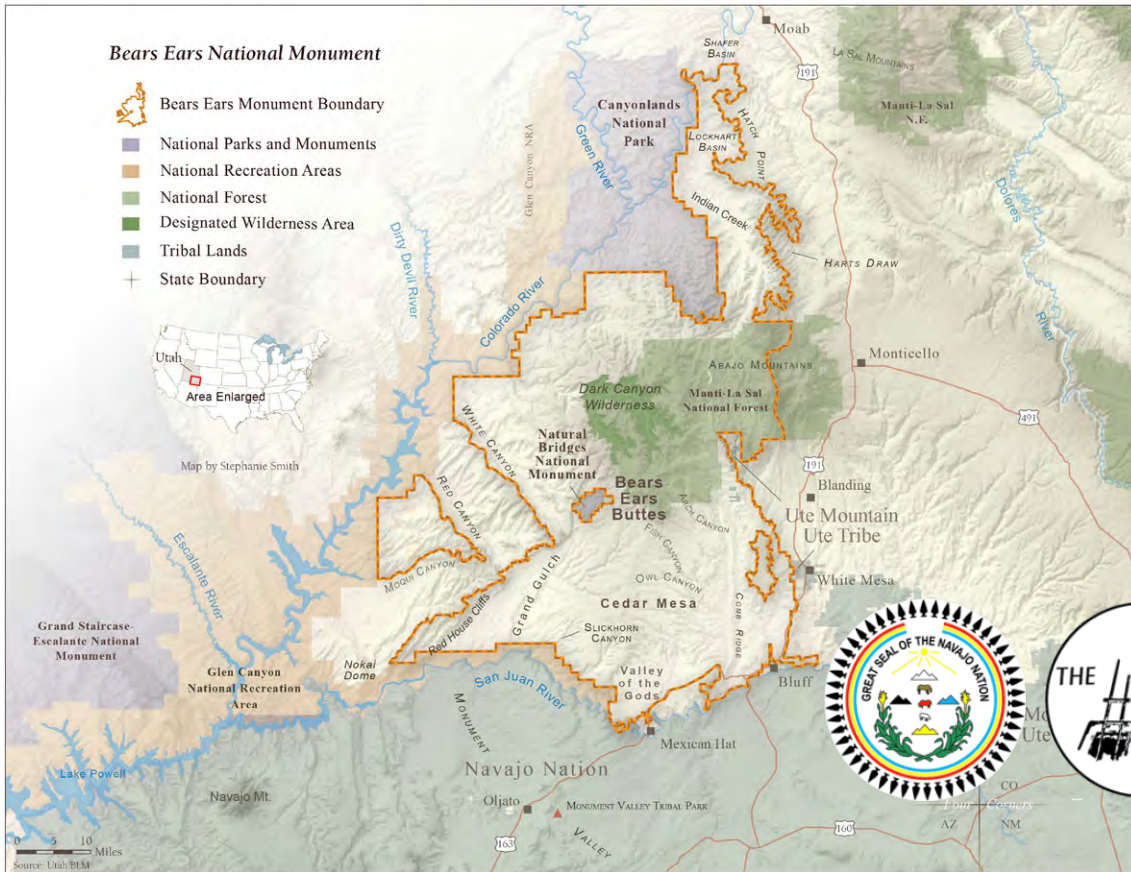
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# BEARS EARS REGION

“On December 28, 2016, President Barack Obama proclaimed the new 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah. This new monument protects one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States, with thousands of sacred cultural sites and important areas of spiritual significance.

The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition (the Coalition) is comprised of five member Tribes—Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, and Pueblo of Zuni—that advocated for the creation of the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) culminating in President Obama’s Proclamation 9558 in December 2016.”

—BEARS EARS INTER-TRIBAL COALITION



## BEARS EARS REGION | DESIGN WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This submission will focus on work completed with partners in the Bears Ears Region of Southeastern Utah. We primarily work with Bears Ears Partnership (BEP) and Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and have welcomed guest lectures from Indigenous community members and the Bears Ears Inter-tribal Coalition.

**Together with our partners we share the goals of protecting Bears Ears through education and stewardship impacting human and nonhuman generations of the past, present, and future.**

We contribute our **design expertise in service to the community** to realize these goals and create unique experiences in so-called Public Lands.



*“... (the studio) is ever-crafting a **non-extractive method** of engaging university design/arts students in rural spaces.”*

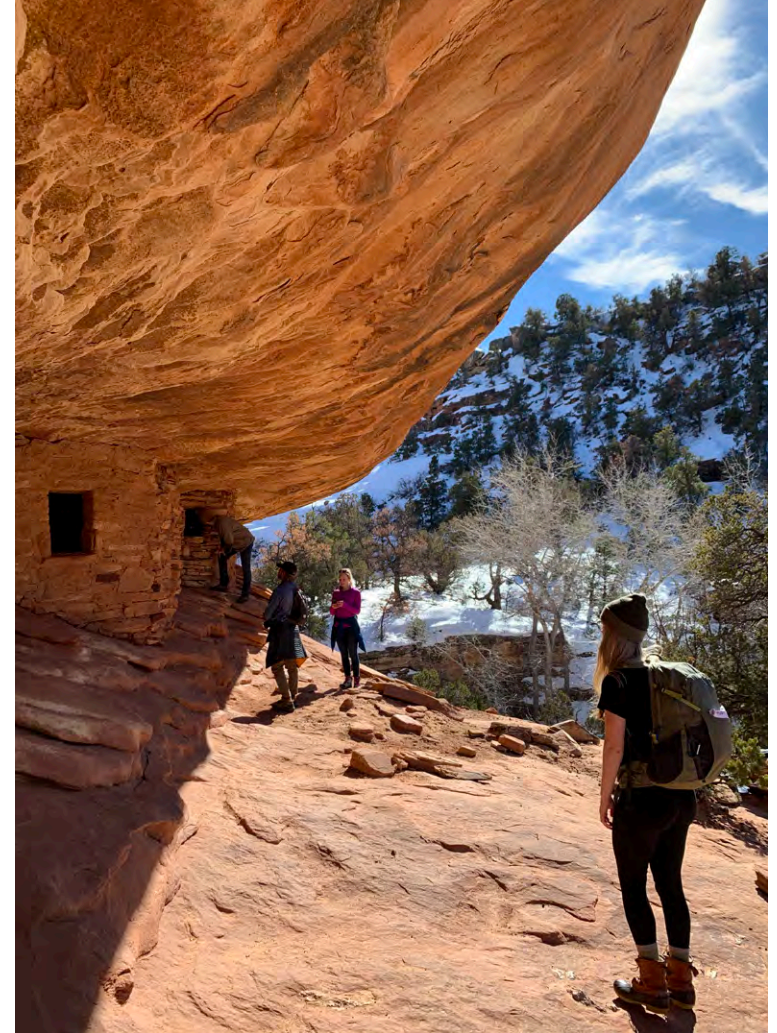
—MARIA SYKES, DIRECTOR, EPICENTER



## DESIGN FIELD STUDIO

Field Studio is an undergraduate design studio in the Division of Multi-disciplinary Design in the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Utah. Students collaborate with community partners to design interventions in Public Lands and adjacent rural communities.

Design briefs and outcomes are generated during the semester with community partners and then implemented beyond the studio with a broad team of collaborators.

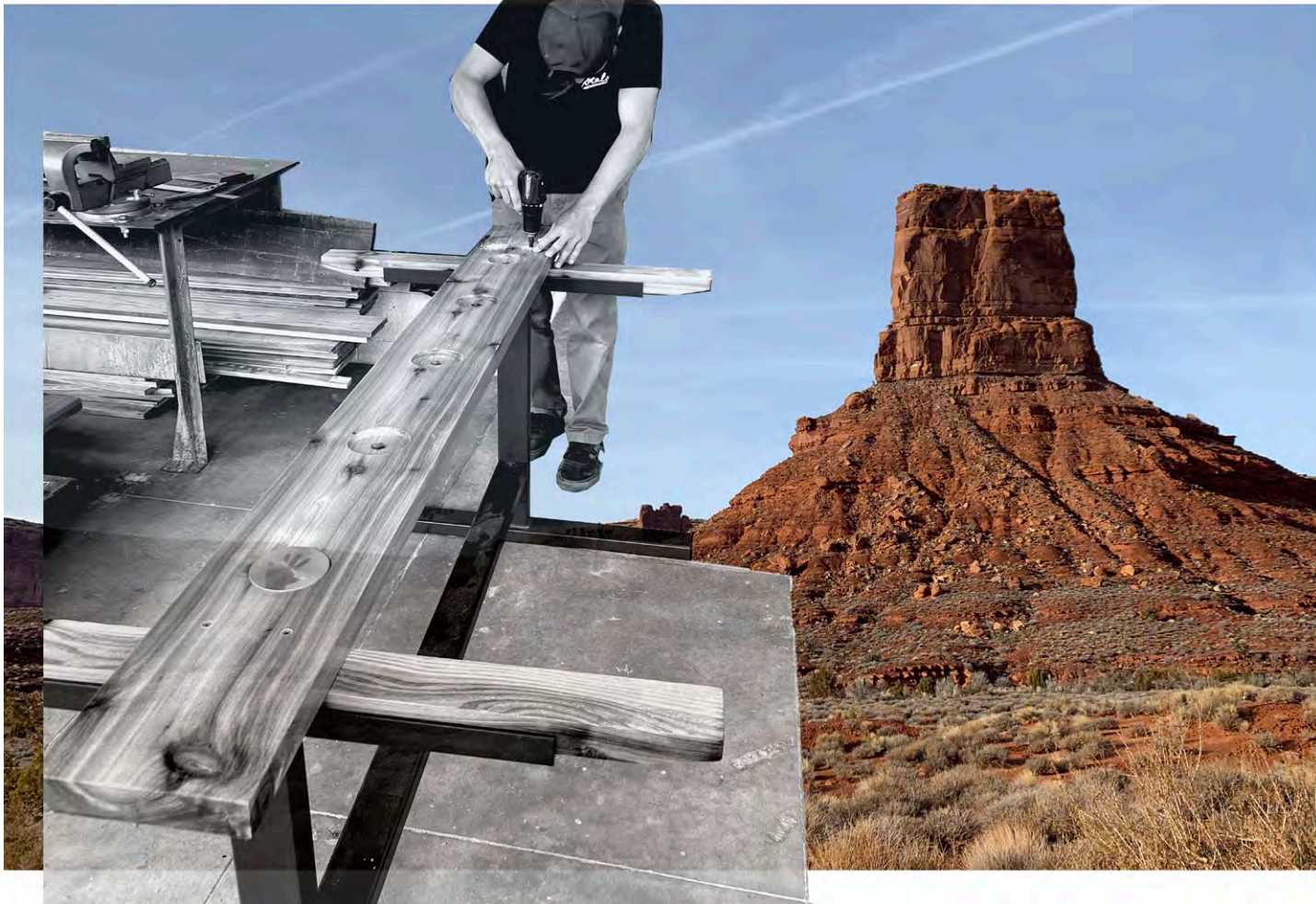


*“This project was my first time getting to design alongside a real life client. It was an awesome opportunity to learn what it takes to work with others outside a school setting, and taught me a lot about the **complex dynamics of a place** I had never heard of before.”—FIELD STUDIO STUDENT*

## DESIGN FIELD STUDIO COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

The studio has adapted a collaborative practice that engages community partners but also makes space for diverse student perspectives and processes. Students define their own emphasis in practice resulting in a wide variety of outcomes including physical, digital, experiential, spatial, speculative, and social products of design. **The studio requires students to think beyond commercial markets and direct their design practice in service of the community, explicitly rejecting colonial and capitalist logics.**

The studio becomes a structure for **building relations through design practice** and creating a network of academic, Tribal, Federal, State, NGO, and community partners working together to realize design goals. The studio **values all collaborators equally, flattening hierarchy between community and institutional partners, while also valuing—and compensating—all forms of labor.** Student work becomes a neutral ground between government institutions and non-profit conservation organizations who have complicated working relationships.



*“Working with Bears Ears Education Center was a privilege and an honor. There was a deeper sense of pride in my work knowing that it would benefit the incredible area that is tied to the center. This project will always have a place reserved in my memory and my soul.”*

—FIELD STUDIO STUDENT

## DESIGN FIELD STUDIO STUDENT PROJECT OUTCOMES

Students are required to craft their own design briefs in response to partner desires and their own research.

By including research and framing in the design process, the studio **positions design practice as a critical form of leadership imagining collective futures.**

Studio deliverables are defined in service to our collaborators, generating an open access archive of materials that become useful tools beyond the semester.



Kassie John (B.S. Design '22) and Sofia Glaittli (B.S. Design '22)

### STUDENTS DEVELOP A DESIGN PROCESS . . .

*informed by positionality and reciprocity,  
mutually obligated to partners and community,  
grounded in research and observation,  
guided by critical framing of opportunities,  
strengthened by 'real world' constraints,  
considering community needs, resources, and budget,  
inspired by experience in place and on the land,  
that makes room for all worlds,  
and generates futures beyond the commercial market.*

### STUDENTS DEVELOP SKILLS AND PRACTICE . . .

*refining concepts for implementation,  
communicating with a variety of fabricators,  
reconciling multiple, diverse points of view,  
prioritizing community needs and desires,  
understanding material selection and details,  
while strengthening building methods,  
and applying digital fabrication.*

## DESIGN FIELD STUDIO **STUDIO OUTCOMES**

While meeting teaching objectives in the design curriculum for students, the studio **expands partner capacity and fulfills research and design objectives they might not otherwise have bandwidth to achieve.**

**Students are empowered by seeing the impact they have in the public sphere and through the process of building their design concepts in real world conditions.** They are introduced to the complexity of team work and diverse collaborations.

*This project required me to think and behave in ways that felt new and clumsy.*

—FIELD STUDIO STUDENT





## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | BLUFF, UTAH

The BEEC is a local resource for community and K-12 education. The Outdoor Classroom provides the perfect opportunity for us to implement the design concepts that we had been developing with BEP and BLM in the studio.



*The Bears Ears Education Center (BEEC) was established in 2016 as a stop-gap measure to address increased visitation. Currently, there is still no formal visitors center for the Bears Ears National Monument.*



# BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | VISIT WITH RESPECT

Bears Ears Partnership developed the Visit With Respect campaign in 2016, and in May 2023, the Bears Ears Commission partnered with Visit With Respect to continue educating the public about responsible and respectful visitation in Bears Ears.

This campaign promotes 19 VWR principles that encourage stewardship, and respect for the land and its people—past, present, and future generations.

The Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service have also adopted the VWR principles creating a consistent and effective education platform for experiencing Public Lands.



## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | VISIT WITH RESPECT in the Outdoor Classroom

The project meets partner goals of creating new activities to engage visitors and youth, while broadening the reach of the VWR program.

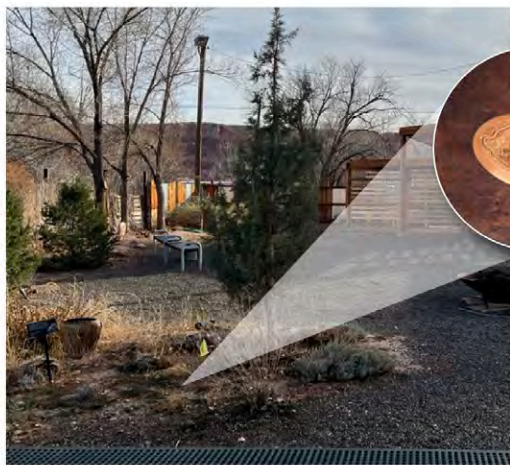
The experience we created guides visitors through a scavenger hunt in the yard to locate VWR survey markers. The markers are found in the tables to reinforce the messaging and prototype the table as communication device for other sites.



Student renderings and diagrams of the proposal.



Visit With Respect Icons



Outdoor Classroom at the BEEC.



Concept and rendering by MDD students, Zac Bailey & Lyndsay Erickson



Students take rubbings of the survey markers as they locate and identify them in the yard.



Concept for engraved brass survey marker. Markers will be placed in the classroom at points of interest relevant to the respective VWR principle.



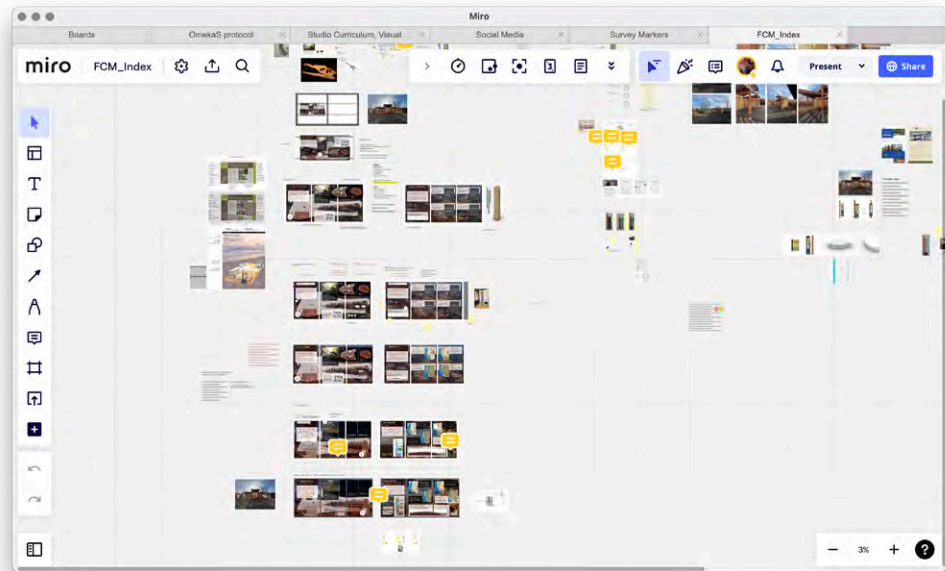
Typical brass survey marker can be custom engraved by Surv-Kap.

## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | EXHIBIT DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

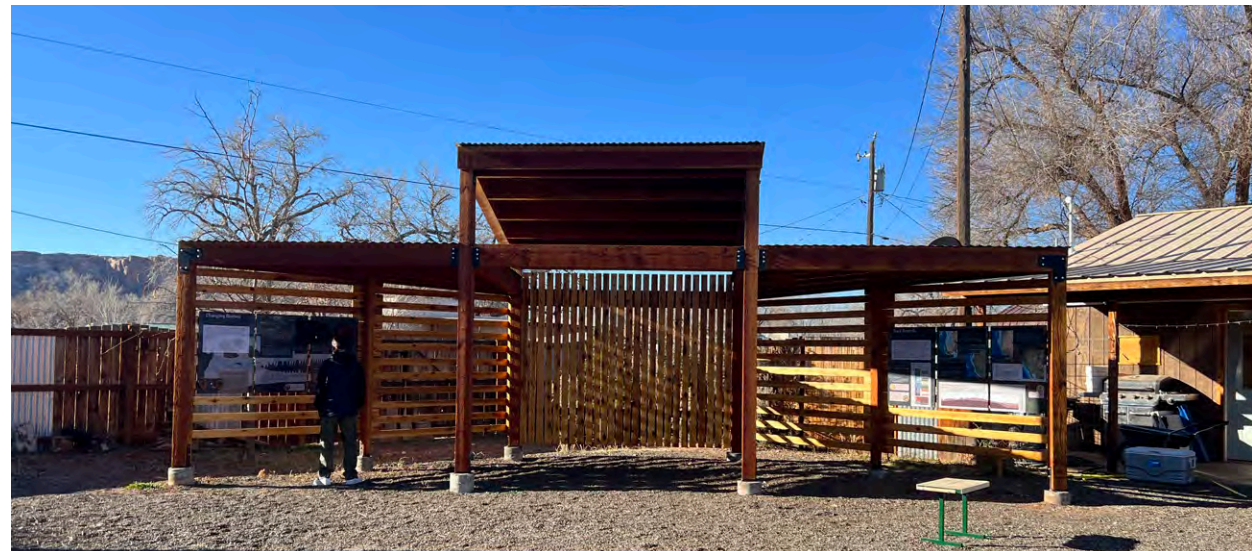
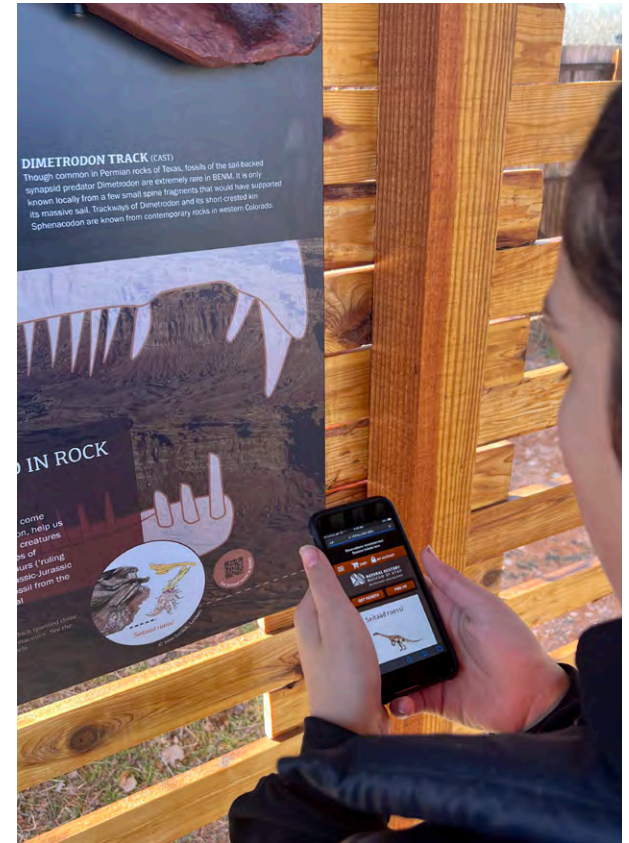
We worked with Sarah Burak, Education Director for BEP, to develop exhibit content and design. We coordinated a broad network of experts in geology, paleontology, and archeology to draft the exhibit panels. We collaborated remotely using tools like Miro, Google Drive, and Zoom.



*Students prototyped 3d exhibit features in the shop.*



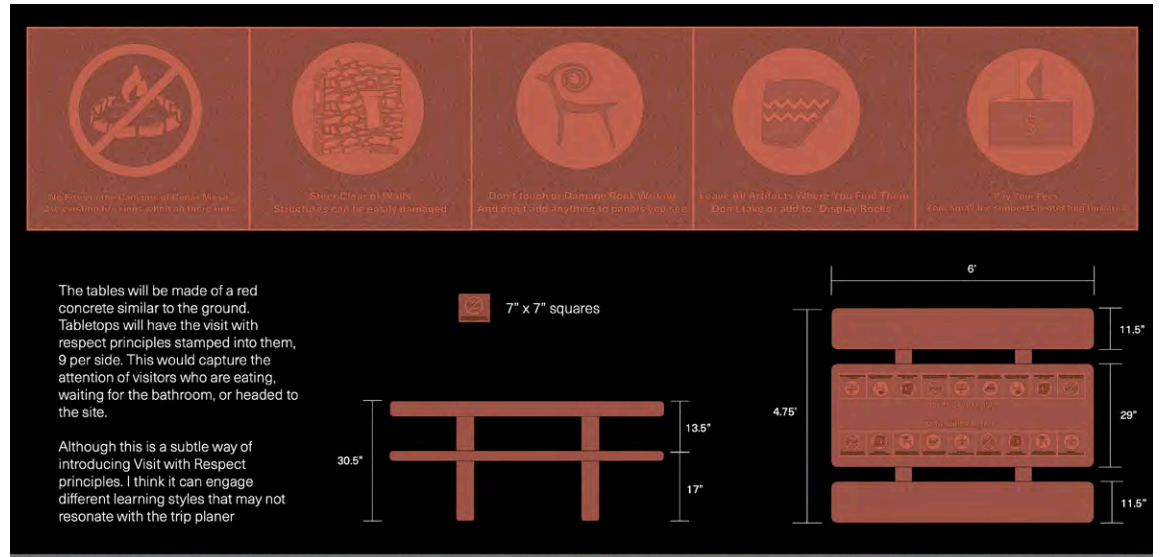
# BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER EXHIBITS: CHANGING BIOMES & ROCK RECORDS



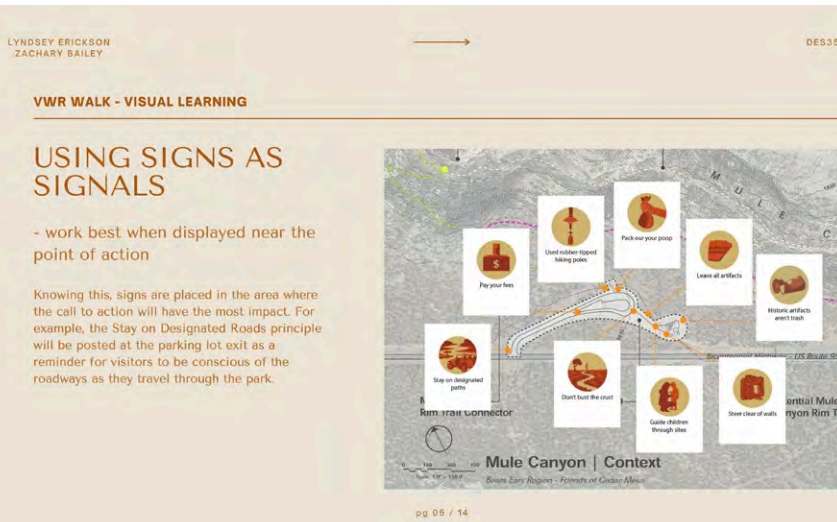
*The exhibits highlight the geological history and unique changing landscapes over time. Including connections to other institutions in the State like the Natural History Museum of Utah and featuring exciting 3d fossil casts and geological strata.*

# BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | STUDENT DESIGN CONCEPTS

Final implementation at the BEEC draws on the variety of concepts from student work in the studio that are developed with our community partners.



*In Spring of 2021, we worked with BLM staff to design experiential interventions at the Mule Canyon Interpretive Site. EJ Spence (B.S. Design '22) identified the ubiquitous Public Lands picnic table as a potential surface for communication and education. He crafted a proposal for embedding the VWR principles into the furniture itself, avoiding the need to clutter the experience with additional infrastructure.*



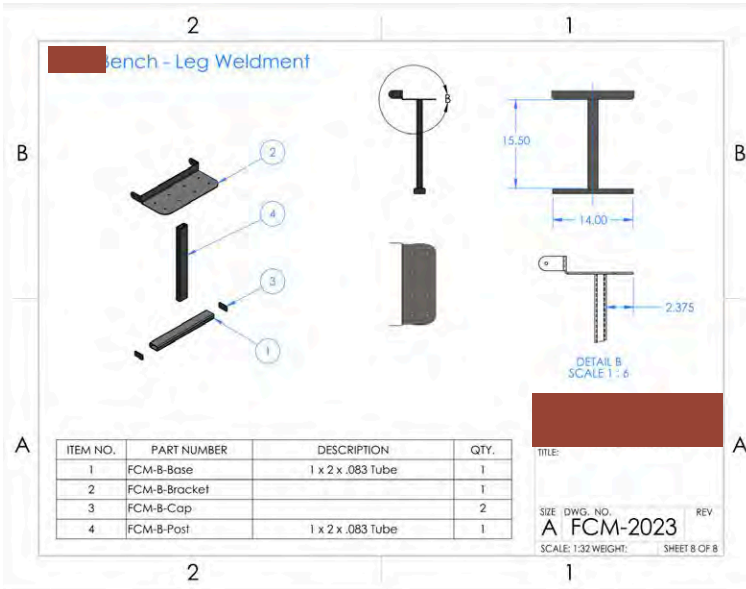
*In the same studio, Zachary Bailey (B.S. Design '22) and Lyndsey Erickson (B.S. Design '22), designed an interactive experience in which visitors could search for VWR icons distributed throughout the site in contexts demonstrating their impact and importance first hand.*



*Student teams in the Fall of 2022 further developed these ideas in collaboration with both BLM and Bears Ears Partnership to draft proposals combining the two concepts into a VWR table design. BEP staff selected a concept by Morgan Doane, Will Napier, Tracy Phan, Vince Jedlika, and Anton Towers which was then refined by independent student research assistants.*

## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | FABRICATION

Following the studio, research assistants are funded to continue fabrication and installation phases of the project. From drawings, to trade coordination, building, and assembly of the final furnishings.



*Students created fabrication drawings for laser-cutting the furniture brackets and welding the bases, which were then powder-coated while the cedar tops were processed in our school shop on campus.*



*We are especially grateful to Vince Johnson, our college shop manager for all of his consultation and support along the way.*

## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | FABRICATION

The final design makes use of stock components and considers future maintenance and replacement of the wood table top and bench seats. Ensuring sustainability of the product in a rural place like Bluff.

We worked with Serv-Kap, a company that manufactures survey markers, to create custom brass markers with the VWR icons. We modified the markers to fit holes we cut into the table top on the CNC.





# BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER | OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: Exhibits, Interactives, and Furniture

This fall we celebrate the final installation of the VWR tables and interactives at the BEEC. In addition to using the tables for education, events, and groups, the side yard is open to the public 24/7.



BEEC OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

VISIT WITH RESPECT  
SURVEY MARKER INTERACTIVE

2D & 3D EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS

VISIT WITH RESPECT TABLES  
AND BENCHES



Guests to the BEEC can enjoy the tables for a picnic and learn about the unique ecology, paleontology, and geology of Bears Ears. These activities enrich visitor experience while providing heuristic forms of education leading to respect and stewardship for Bears Ears.

Children (and adults) are invited to locate different Visit With Respect survey makers distributed through-out the yard, taking rubbings of each on their worksheet which then folds into a VWR passport.



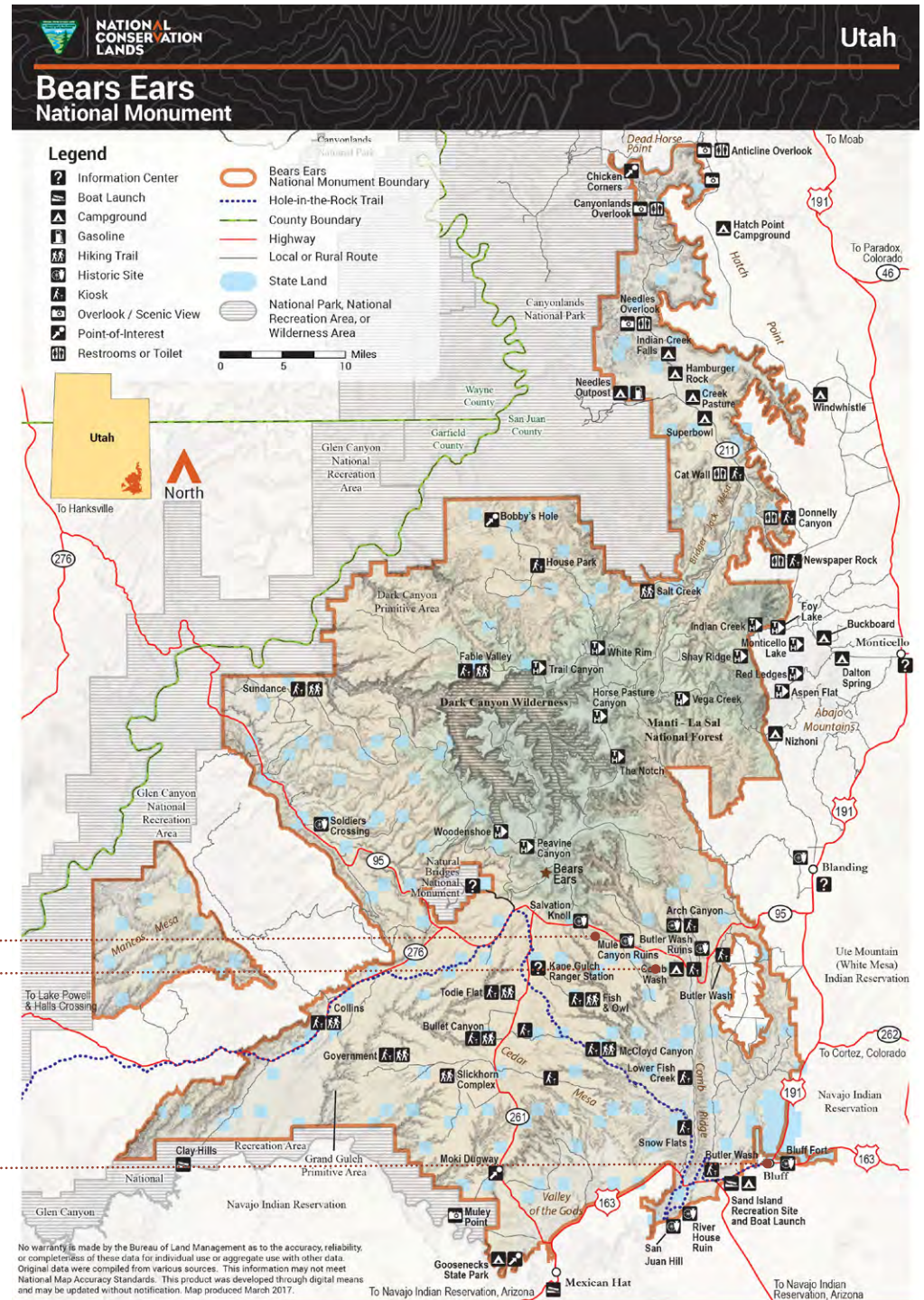
## NEXT STEPS: BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Bureau of Land Management BENM staff are interested in (6) more VWR tables for the Comb Wash Campground. We are currently adapting the design to meet the unique needs of “middle-country” camping areas.

Visitors in Bears Ears will engage the Visit With Respect platform in a variety of situations and touch-points strengthening its effective communication and impact on stewardship.



Comb Wash Campground



## COMPENSATION / CREDIT

*Please note, this timeline of this project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We did not visit rural sites or Indigenous Lands during the pandemic or lock-down periods.*

**PROJECT TITLE:** BEEC Outdoor Classroom

**MONTH/YEAR COMPLETED:** September 2023

**ROLE OF NOMINEE:** Project lead, studio instructor, design, partner coordination, project management, fabrication and installation.

### COLLABORATORS & FUNDING SOURCES EXPENSES

**PROJECT LEAD:** my time and labor in this project fulfilled teaching, research, and service that I am contracted for through my University salary.

**PARTNER STAFF:** completed their work in the project within the scope of paid labor/time with their respective organizations.

**EXHIBIT CONSULTANTS:** 4 scientific experts donated a combined 6 hours, approximately, to advise on exhibit content.

**LASER CUTTING:** paid \$x,xxx for laser cutting of bench base brackets

**WELDING:** paid \$x,xxx for materials and welding of table/bench bases

**POWDER COATING:** paid \$xxx for materials and donated 10 hours of time to powder coat bases

**CEDAR BOARDS:** paid a contractor \$xxx to replace boards damaged by a neighboring construction crew. (Crew paid for replacement lumber)

**EXHIBIT PANELS:** paid \$x,xxx to print final exhibit boards

**EXHIBIT 3D:** paid \$x,xxx to purchase fossil replicas for exhibit

**MAPS:** paid \$xxx to license maps for the exhibits, this was the nonprofit rate.

**SURVEY MAKERS:** paid \$x,xxx for custom brass markers, contractor subsidized 25% of the cost.

**INSTALLATION:** 4 family members donated a weekend in September to accompany me to Bears Ears and assist with installation.

### STUDENT COMPENSATION

Fall 2020: 14 Students received credit for DES 3520, 6-credit hour studio

Spring 2021: 13 Students received credit for DES 3520, 6-credit hour studio

Fall 2022: 30 Students received credit for DES 3520, 6-credit hour studio

3 paid Teaching Assistants at College rate of \$xx/hr

7 paid Research Assistants at College rate of \$xx/hr

3 paid Fabrication Assistants at College rate of \$xx/hr

### EXTERNAL FUNDING

Utah Outdoor Classroom Grant; Utah State Division of Outdoor Recreation

## TEAM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### BEARS EARS PARTNERSHIP

Sarah Burak, Director of Education  
Semira Crank, Visit With Respect Program Director  
Sylvia Taylor, Education Center Manager

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Misti Haines, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Jared Lundell, Monument Manager  
Jacob Palma, Monticello Field Manager  
Jeremy Martin, Bears Ears National Monument Ranger

### DIVISION OF MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DESIGN

Elpitha Tsoutsounakis, Assistant Professor, PI  
Student Design proposals by: EJ Spence, Lyndsey Erickson, Zachary Bailey, Morgan Doane, Will Napier, Tracy Phan, Vince Jedlika, Anton Towers  
Teaching Assistants: Jesse Butterfield, Kit Stansworth, Anton Towers  
Research Assistants: Megan Pettit, Kevin Howard, Mike Rock, Tage Rinehart, Nikki Bennett, Kody Baird, Morgan Doane  
Design Studios: Fall 2020 / Spring 2021 / Fall 2022  
Vince Johnson, Shop Manager  
Emily Cates and Jonny Wilson, Fall 2022 Co-Instructors

### ADDITIONAL COLLABORATORS

William Leggett, Geologist and Park Ranger at Canyonlands National Park

Robert J. Gay, Paleontologist & Education Director, Colorado Canyons Association

Adam K. Huttenlocker, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Integrative Anatomical Sciences University of Southern California

Jonathan Stine, PhD, Institute for Rock Magnetism (IRM) at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Natural History Museum of Utah

Ronald and Dee Blakey, Deeptime Maps; Colorado

Gaston Design, Fruita, Colorado

iZone Imaging, Temple, Texas

Matt Rhodehouse, Mike Pruess, Wheelwerks Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah

Joshua Walker, Merlin Industrial Machining; Salt Lake City, Utah

Luke Streeter, Critical Laser; Lindon, Utah

Kellie Robertson, Surv-Kap; Tuscon, Arizona

Fabrication and installation: Lauren Geisler, Kyle Adams, Sarah Israelsen, Anton Towers, Morgan Doane, Kody Baird, Nikki Bennett, Vaggeli Tsoutsounakis, Pavli Tsoutsounakis, Dimi Tsoutsounakis, Eva Sifantonakis

Division of Multi-disciplinary Design, University of Utah

College of Architecture and Planning, University of Utah

