Greetings Pecos Conference participants! The State of Utah, School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (aka, SITLA) is holding a day-long open house for all Pecos Conference attendees and others who would like to see this locally well-known archaeological site. (The event was originally advertised as one of the tours open to attendees of this year’s Pecos Conference; but the tour host thought a day-long open house was preferable to a single tour.)

Directions: From downtown Blanding (i.e., the flashing stoplight at Center and Main Streets) go south on Highway 191 just under four miles to the junction of Highways 191 and 95. Keep your odometer rolling as you turn right onto Highway 95 and travel west across upper Cottonwood, Butler and Comb Washes toward Natural Bridges N.M and Lake Powell. Go a total of 23.25 miles to where you’ll see a sign that says “Pecos Conference Open House”. Turn left here and drive a couple hundred meters south on the two-track road leading south from Highway 95 to a fairly flat, open spot with a small “Quad Pod” travel trailer parked on it. You are now at the old well pad shown on the attached map. This is a preferable place to park and walk the last +/- quarter-mile south on the two-track dirt road to the site (see map). I will be either at the site or the well pad all day on Sunday, August 10th and will do my best to help make your site visit as enjoyable as possible.

Details About The Site: The Cave Towers Site (42SA1725) is a locally well-known Pueblo III structural site. It has been the subject of a handful of investigations since the early 1960s. The latest of these was Alison Brethauer’s (2010) Master’s thesis. Numerous structural features cluster around and atop a sandstone rim pour-off that quickly and drastically entrenches to the elevation of Mule Canyon (see map). Five of these are interpreted by Brethauer (2010:131) as towers, two others as possible kivas, and various other linear alignments suggest rectangular rooms. Another set of masonry architectural features just below the canyon rim are interpreted as possible storage rooms and two kivas. Middens accompany the architecture of both levels. One of the better springs in the Cedar Mesa area is found in the overhang (or “cave”) formed by the pour-off. The site has been heavily visited over the years, but despite this the structures themselves have fared relatively well. (It’s the site setting that has suffered most.) The site is one of the most visually appealing archaeological sites on state trust land in Utah, and has been firmly linked to the evolution of SITLA’s cultural resource management paradigm. In recognition of the site’s importance, the agency (SITLA) is beginning to develop Cave Towers to better preserve the site for the long term. We want to thoughtfully create the right amount and kind of physical development here that tells visitors to the site that “this place matters, someone cares about it” and, most importantly, “we want you to care about it, too”. We have learned from experience that appropriately scaled, thoughtfully tailored development that includes some site interpretation is the best way to minimize the effects of heavy visitation.

Thanks much for your interest, I look forward to seeing you on Sunday the 10th.

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Reference Cited

Brethauer, Alison V.
Cave Towers Site Access

Mule Canyon Ruin Loop Road

State Highway 95

Two-Track Road To Cave Towers

Old Well Pad / Parking Area

Rough Two-Track Road, Walking Access To Cave Towers Site

Cave Towers Site (42SA1725)