



Native Plant Society of New Mexico
P. O. Box 35388
Albuquerque, NM 87176-5388

February 5, 2024

Dear DarkSky International:

The Native Plant Society of New Mexico strongly supports the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument's application to be an International Dark Skies Sanctuary. The National Monument encompasses more than 550 acres and is surrounded by National Forest lands, more than 40 miles from the closest small city of Silver City. It is a wonderful place to observe the stars.

The park has an impressive diversity of ecosystems from cliffs to hot springs to shallow rivers and caves. Vegetation mapping has identified 16 different plant community types and 527 species of plants. Plants rely on insects and other animals for pollination and seed dispersal. Many of these organisms such as moths and bats rely on dark skies and become disoriented when there is light pollution, harming plants' reproductive success. One study showed that 70% of moths fly towards a street light rather than towards flowering plants and another showed that LED lighting near a meadow reduced pollinator visitation rates as much as 62% (<http://tinyurl.com/2m542fy7>). Our state flower in New Mexico, the yucca, relies on moth pollination. The Monument is home to the moth pollinated *Yucca baccata* and *Oenotheras* (evening primroses) among others, and the bat-pollinated *Agave parryi*.

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is important not only culturally, but also botanically and ecologically. Making this site a Dark Skies sanctuary will help to protect its amazing diversity of plants and animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Sylvan Kaufman'.

Sylvan Kaufman
Conservation Chair