

Camp Naco Preservation in Naco, Cochise County, AZ

Camp Naco (also known as Camp Newell) in Naco, Cochise County is the only surviving Buffalo Soldier fort left on the U.S. Mexican Border. Built between 1919 and 1923, Camp Naco first housed military personnel during the Mexican Border Defense campaign and later served as a base camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps. Troops encamped at the facility included units of the renowned Buffalo Soldiers.

This historical site was gifted from a private entity in 2006 to Huachuca City. In December 2008, a grant proposal was submitted to the Arizona Heritage Fund by the Town of Huachuca City with two non-profit partners, the Naco Heritage Alliance and the Center for Desert Archaeology, for the preservation and restoration of Camp Naco.

Camp Naco was the only Western camp made of adobe—and, ironically, the only one that remains fairly intact. However, over the years Camp Naco has suffered tragic vandalism, severe erosion, and disastrous arson.

Because of its historical significance, Camp Naco made the Arizona Preservation Foundation's 2007 List of Arizona's Most Endangered Historic Places. On May 21, 2006, an arson attack by vandals damaged four of the camp's historic buildings. The roof on the Recreation Hall was made of asbestos-containing transite, and this material was made friable due to the fire and/or being vandalized.



In January 2010, ADEQ received a letter of request from the Town of Huachuca City in cooperation with the Naco Heritage Alliance for cleanup funds under the 128(a) grant to hire contractors to do the asbestos abatement. The ADEQ Brownsfield Program provided \$37,100 in cleanup funds so that the asbestos could be removed from that building as well as the open areas where it has been observed on the ground surface. The cleanup was completed in July 2010 with final oversight from the ADEQ Voluntary Remediation Program. The cleanup cleared the way for needed restorative repairs on the roof, and the building as a whole, to reduce the threat of erosion by upcoming monsoon rains. This additional work was funded by \$17,500 grant from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historical Preservation awarded in April 2007. The Naco Heritage Alliance also received a \$3,000 award from Bureau of Land Management to continue work at Camp Naco.

In 2018, the City of Bisbee took over ownership of Camp Naco and is continuing to explore funding options and future uses for the site.

Many in the Naco community feel that a rehabilitated and preserved Camp Naco would expand the economic benefits of tourism for the area. A study conducted by the Arizona Research and Resource Center for the Cochise County Tourism calculated that \$930,000 in direct expenditures per year could be generated based on the assumption that visitors would spend a half-day touring the restored Camp Naco site. It could also provide much needed jobs for local residents.

