

Montana Wildlife Federation ♦ Wyoming Wildlife Federation ♦ Colorado Wildlife Federation
Idaho Wildlife Federation ♦ Nevada Wildlife Federation ♦ New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR) ♦ Conservation Northwest (WA)
Planning & Conservation League (CA)
National Wildlife Federation

August 16, 2017

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers and other conservationists across the West. For most of the last century, we have been leaders in defending the West's abundant fish and wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.

Our Federations have been greatly disheartened by the Interior Department's decision to "review" a targeted group of national monuments. This review is unnecessary and threatens the public lands that are the inheritance of all Americans. Reducing, repealing or removing protections for our national monuments would undercut a major driver of our \$887 billion outdoor economy, which supports more than 7 million jobs nationwide. The review also takes budget and personnel resources away from an already depleted Interior Department, threatening the Department's ability to meet the needs of multiple-use public land stakeholders on so many more important issues.

Over the last few months, you have announced the completion of the review process for several monuments, including the Hanford Reach National Monument in Washington, the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument in Arizona, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument in Montana, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho, and Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado.

It is good to see that you agree these five national monuments must be kept intact and unchanged for future generations. We note in particular the importance of your action as a public acknowledgement that the Antiquities Act is a valuable tool to protect not just cultural resources, but also the large landscapes and wildlife so important to hunters, anglers, and all outdoor users.

- The 377,000 acre Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument includes "some of the wildest country on all the Great Plains, as well as important wildlife habitat" (Presidential proclamation 7398, January 17, 2001). The monument protects riparian and upland habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, sage-grouse, raptors, and numerous other species.

- The 195,000 acre Hanford Reach National Monument “is a biological treasure, embracing important riparian, aquatic, and upland shrub-steppe habitats that are rare or in decline in other areas...In addition to its vital biological resources, the monument contains significant geological and paleontological objects” (Presidential proclamation 7319, June 9, 2000).
- The 1,014,000 acre Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument “is a vast, biologically diverse, impressive landscape encompassing an array of scientific and historic objects...Diverse wildlife inhabit the monument, including a trophy-quality mule deer herd, Kaibab squirrels, and wild turkey. There are numerous threatened or endangered species as well...[and] candidate or sensitive species” (Presidential proclamation 7265, January 11, 2000).
- The 661,287 acre Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho includes “700-year-old juniper trees and relict stands of sagebrush that are essential habitat for sensitive sage grouse populations. These tracts of relict vegetation are remarkable benchmarks that aid in the scientific study of changes to vegetative communities from recent human activity as well as the role of natural fire in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem” (Presidential proclamation 7373, November 9, 2001).
- The 164,000 acre Canyon of the Ancients National Monument “is home to a wide variety of wildlife species, including unique herpetological resources. Crucial habitat for the Mesa Verde nightsnake, long-nosed leopard lizard, and twin-spotted spiny lizard can be found within the monument...Peregrine falcons have been observed in the area, as have golden eagles, American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and northern harriers. Game birds like Gambel's quail and mourning dove are found throughout the monument ...” (Presidential proclamation 7317, June 9, 2000).

Your decision that these five national monuments should not be modified is a reaffirmation that wildlife and ecosystems are objects of historic and scientific interest worthy of protection under the Antiquities Act. As you know, the protection of wildlife habitat has been one of the essential uses of the Antiquities Act for more than a century, from Theodore Roosevelt’s designation of the 600,000 acre Mount Olympus National Monument in 1909 in order to protect habitat for the Roosevelt elk. Since that time, monuments have been designated specifically to protect large habitat areas across the West, in both rural areas and adjacent to fast-growing urban centers, with widespread local support.

As hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, conservationists, and Americans, we believe all the national monuments under review contain objects of historic and scientific interest worthy of protection under the Antiquities Act and once designated should not be modified. Further, the legal ability to change national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act was wisely reserved by Congress and not delegated to the President. When some public lands are declared safe and others are not after a substantial period of review, even the casual observer begins to question the end goal of such a review. Instead of attempting to redraw monument boundaries or alter their management from the top down, federal land managers should continue to use collaborative planning processes to bring stakeholders together and development management plans that address the needs of each monument.

The national monuments review flies in the face of the American Antiquities Act of 1906. We urge you to bring this review to an expeditious close and consistently uphold the principle that wildlife and habitat are objects of historic and scientific interest that merit the application of the Act. The prudent, patriotic, and scientifically sound action is to uphold Antiquities Act and declare that all monuments will remain as they were legally designated.

Sincerely,

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