

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
CONCERNING THE DESIGNATION OF MONUMENTS PURSUANT TO THE
AUTHORITY PROVIDED BY THE ANTIQUITIES ACT
July 27, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the designation of monuments by the President pursuant to the authority provided by the Antiquities Act. Enacted over 100 years ago, the Antiquities Act has been used by presidents of both parties as an instrument to preserve and protect critical natural, historical, and scientific resources on Federal lands for future generations.

The Antiquities Act was the first U.S. law to provide general legal protection of cultural and natural resources of historic or scientific interest on Federal lands. After a generation-long effort, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act on June 8, 1906. The Antiquities Act set an important precedent by asserting a broad public interest in the preservation of these resources on Federal lands. Designations under the Act apply only to Federal lands; they place no restrictions on private property and have not affected valid existing rights.

After signing it into law, President Roosevelt used the Antiquities Act eighteen times to establish national monuments. Those first monuments included what are now known as Grand Canyon National Park, Petrified Forest National Park, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Tumacacori National Historical Park, and Olympic National Park.

Since President Roosevelt, sixteen U.S. presidents have used the Act over 150 times to establish or expand national monuments. Congress may also pass legislation designating national monuments. Currently, the National Park Service manages 83 national monuments. The Bureau of Land Management administers 25 national monuments. And the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers 6 national monuments.

The Antiquities Act has a proven track record of protecting significant Federal lands and the unique cultural and natural resources they possess. These monuments have become universally revered symbols of America's beauty and legacy. Though some national monuments have been established amidst controversy, who among us today would dam the Grand Canyon, turn Muir Woods over to development, or deny the historic significance of Harriet Tubman's struggle against slavery? These sites are cherished landscapes that help to define the American spirit. They speak eloquently to the wisdom of retaining the Antiquities Act in its current form.

The Administration has previously noted that, like his predecessors, President Obama's designations have provided permanent protections for unique historic and cultural sites, incredible natural resources and wildlife habitat. These include, among others, Waco Mammoth National Monument in Texas, Stonewall National Monument in New York, San Juan Islands National Monument in Washington, and Río Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico. President Obama's use of the Antiquities Act has been supported by a wide range of

stakeholders, including state and local governments, tribes, business groups, elected officials, community leaders, regional utilities, as well as faith leaders, sportsmen, historians, conservationists, recreation enthusiasts, and others.

While the Antiquities Act authorizes the president to establish a national monument at the president's sole discretion, this Administration has invited public comment at meetings in the local communities. Administration officials, including from the Department, have attended many community meetings across the nation, and have heard from stakeholders interested in protecting the places that they care about. These officials have also heard from stakeholders concerned with the potential impacts of any such designation.

The Administration consistently strives to take into account the interests of this wide range of stakeholders to both protect America's public lands and provide for economic development in a manner that is consistent with applicable laws and sound public policy. Beyond their contributions to clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, our nation's cultural heritage and scientific understanding, the economic impacts of federal lands are substantial. National parks, national wildlife refuges, national monuments and other public lands managed by the Department hosted an estimated 443 million recreational visits in 2015, and these visits alone supported \$45 billion in economic output and about 396,000 jobs nationwide. (*U.S. Department of the Interior's Economic Report for Fiscal Year 2015.*)

The authority granted to the President by Congress through the Antiquities Act is one of the most important tools a president has to improve our country. It is a tool that this President has not used lightly or invoked without serious consideration of the impacts on current and future generations.

The President is committed to continuing the responsible use of the Antiquities Act to protect the nation's special places. These places can help tell a more complete story of America, protect antiquities at risk of looting or development, create local jobs and boost small businesses should they be recognized on the national stage, and provide experiences for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Administration.