

April 23, 2018

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we write to express our strong opposition to legislation weakening the Antiquities Act or codifying attempts to shrink or eliminate national monuments. Any attack on our public lands, monuments, oceans, and waters is an attack on our communities, our history, our contributions to this great nation, and our culture; and it robs the next generation of a chance to learn from these shared treasures. It has often been said that our nation's public lands system is one of our best ideas; we must now come together to protect these special places.

In addition to protecting majestic places, sustaining wildlife, and benefiting local economies and communities, national monuments promote diversity and inclusivity in our system of public lands. Our nation's public lands are owned by all people in this country, and we all ought to see our histories and cultures reflected in these public lands. That is one reason why national parks, historical sites, and monuments are so important: they can help tell a more complete story of our country's history and the many cultures and movements that have helped shape our United States.

National monuments in particular have helped make our public lands more inclusive by commemorating the fights for civil rights and racial justice, women's suffrage, LGBTQ equality, workers' rights, tribal recognition and traditions, and so many other pivotal moments, individuals, and movements that continue to take our country forward. Places such as Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, Stonewall National Monument, Pullman National Monument, Cesar E. Chavez National Monument, and Bears Ears National Monument help preserve and share the history and experiences that comprehensively reflect the stories of all people in this country.

The Antiquities Act, which has been used by eight Republicans and eight Democrats, allows presidents to preserve important places as national monuments and has even provided the initial protections for nearly half of our national parks, including the Grand Canyon and Acadia National Parks. President Theodore Roosevelt signed this bedrock conservation law in 1906, and since then presidents have used it to protect remarkable places that tell the fuller story of our nation.

Unfortunately, we write at a time when national monuments and the Antiquities Act are under assault. Nearly one year ago, President Trump signed an executive order directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review dozens of national monument designations. This resulted in President Trump taking the single biggest step in removing protections for public lands in our nation's history when he overstepped his statutory authority and cut Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments by two million acres. Now legislation may move in Congress that would not only codify Trump's rollbacks – H.R. 4532 and H.R. 4558 – but also threaten the very purpose of the Antiquities Act. Representative Bishop's H.R. 3990 and Senator Murkowski's S. 33, for example, would severely limit presidents' power to protect incredible and representative places for future generations.

Congress should not be making it harder to protect places that can make our parks and monuments system more inclusive and tell the fuller story of our nation's history. That is why we urge you to reject any legislation that would limit the president's authority under the Antiquities Act or codify any unlawful rollbacks of existing national monuments.

While not all undersigned groups work on every issue discussed in this letter, we can all agree on what's at risk if protections for special places are removed and our legacy of shaping a more inclusive system of public lands is undermined. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

350.org

Alaska Wilderness League

American Civil Liberties Union

American Rivers

American Society of Landscape Architects

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance

Center for American Progress

CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

Chispa

Clean Water Action

Conservation Lands Foundation

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

Defenders of Wildlife

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Earthjustice

Endangered Species Coalition

Environmental Working Group

FORGE, Inc.

GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality

GLSEN

GreenLatinos

Hip Hop Caucus

Hispanic Access Foundation

Human Rights Campaign

League of Conservation Voters

Movement Advancement Project

National Audubon Society

National Black Justice Coalition

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Center for Transgender Equality

National Congress of American Indians

National Immigration Law Center

National LGBTQ Task Force

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Next 100 Coalition
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Conservation Research
Oceana
People For the American Way
Public Citizen
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Save Animals Facing Extinction
Service Employees International Union
Sierra Club
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
State Innovation Exchange (SIX)
Surfrider Foundation
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Praxis Project
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
Union for Reform Judaism
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Western Values Project
WildEarth Guardians

State and Local Organizations

ACLU of Idaho
Amargosa Conservancy
Audubon South Carolina
Boise Bicycle Project
California League of Conservation Voters
Carrizo Plain Conservancy
Charleston Audubon Society
Columbia Audubon Society
Conservation Alabama
Conservation Colorado
Conservation Northwest
Conservation Voters for Idaho
Conservation Voters of South Carolina
Conserve Southwest Utah
Desert Wildlife Consultants, LLC
Engage Idaho
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Environmental Protection Information Center
Fort Ord Recreation Trails (FORT) Friends
Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area
Friends of Arizona Joshua Tree Forest

Friends of Cedar Mesa
Friends of Gold Butte
Friends of Point Arena-Stornetta Lands
Friends of the Desert Mountains
Friends of the San Pedro River
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners
Hoosier Environmental Council
Idaho Business for the Outdoors
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Outdoor Business Council
Klamath Forest Alliance
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maine Conservation Voters
Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Montana Conservation Voters
Mystic Aquarium
Nature for All
North Carolina League of Conservation Voters
Nevada Conservation League
New Jersey Highlands Coalition
New Jersey League of Conservation Voters
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
NW Energy Coalition
Oregon League of Conservation Voters
Oregon Wild
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Raritan Headwaters
Seven Circles Foundation
Sound Action
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
The Ohio Environmental Council
Trinidad Coastal Land Trust
Utah Dine Bikeyah
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Washington Conservation Voters
Washington Environmental Council
Western Slope Conservation Center
Wilderness Workshop
Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network