

July 6, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members across the country, we ask that you oppose any legislation that would weaken the Antiquities Act and urge you to use the authority granted to you under that act to protect America's most significant and threatened places of historical, cultural and environmental value, for the benefit of our economy and future generations.

There is a longstanding and bipartisan history of U.S. presidents using the Antiquities Act for the benefit of future generations. Since President Theodore Roosevelt first used it in 1906, 15 presidents – eight Republicans and seven Democrats – have used the Antiquities Act to protect some of our most cherished and recognizable national treasures, including the Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon.

Spanning more than a century, presidents from both political parties have regularly used the act to designate approximately 130 national monuments. Among the most recent uses, in 2006 President George W. Bush designated the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, which at 139,000 square miles is the largest national monument ever created.

In addition to protecting vestiges of American history and preserving recreational opportunities for millions of Americans, national monuments can serve to significantly bolster local economies. Recent studies have shown that protecting public lands, and creating national monuments in particular, goes hand in hand with job creation and local economic growth. In a 2011 report, Headwaters Economics reviewed 17 national monuments and found without exception that local economies experienced growth following a monument's designation.

We were pleased to see that the report for your America's Great Outdoors initiative recommended that you use the Antiquities Act to protect objects of natural and cultural value. The report also noted that "strong support was voiced for the designation of unique places as national monuments as an important way to preserve critical elements of the American landscape and cultural heritage."

We strongly support this recommendation to use the Antiquities Act and also ask that you oppose any effort to remove or weaken your authority under the act. As you said when releasing the America's Great Outdoors report, "today, our open spaces are more precious than ever -- and it's more important than ever that we come together to protect them for the next generation."

Sincerely,

Jessica M. Verges, President
Alaska Association for Historic Preservation

Cindy Shogan, Executive Director
Alaska Wilderness League

John Zvonar, President
Alliance for Historic Landscape
Preservation

Linea Sundstrom, Chair, Conservation
Committee
American Rock Art Research Association

Donna Lamm, Executive Director
Amargosa Conservancy

Nancy C. Somerville, Executive Vice
President/CEO
American Society of Landscape Architects

Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater

Susan Arnold, Vice President of
Conservation
Appalachian Mountain Club

Jeff Williamson, Senior Conservationist
Arizona Zoological Society at The Phoenix
Zoo

Erik Molvar, Executive Director
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Michael J. Painter, Coordinator
Californians for Western Wilderness

John Podesta, President & CEO
Center for American Progress Action Fund

William H. Doelle, President and CEO
Center for Desert Archaeology

Bethany Gravell, Executive Director
Center for Native Ecosystems

Joel Dunn, Executive Director
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Christi Biniarz, President
Citizens for Dixie's Future

Katie Blackett, Chief Executive Officer
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The Conservation Alliance

Brian O'Donnell, Executive Director
Conservation Lands Foundation

Mitch Friedman, Executive Director
Conservation Northwest

Deborah J. Gangloff, Ph.D., President &
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Crow Canyon Archaeological Center

Rodger Schlickeisen, President and CEO
Defenders of Wildlife

Marion M. Kyde PhD, President
Delaware River Greenway Partnership

Trip Van Noppen, President
Earthjustice

Sanders Moore, Advocate
Environment New Mexico

Philip Greenlee, President
Federation of Fly Fishers

Glenda Simmons, President
Friends of Agua Fria National Monument

Kirk Johnson, Executive Director
Friends of Allegheny Wilderness

Nancy Hall, Director
Friends of Gold Butte

Mike Quigley, President, Board of Directors
Friends of Ironwood Forest

Joel Hoffman, Director
Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert
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Mark Beauchamp, President
Friends of Red Rock Canyon

Thomas Hulen, Executive Director
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Grand Staircase Escalante Partners

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Great Old Broads for Wilderness

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Scott Shlaes, Executive Director
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Jenny L. Neeley, Conservation Policy
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Sky Island Alliance

Dave Willis, Chair
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Southern Environmental Law Center

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Andrew Fulks, President
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Gretchen Nicholoff, President
Western Colorado Congress

Bob Gale, Ecologist
Western North Carolina Alliance

William H Meadows, President
The Wilderness Society

Tracy Davids, Executive Director
WildSouth

David Hannah, Conservation Director
Wild Virginia

cc: The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
The Honorable Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture