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National monuments in the West boost local economies and ecosystems, report finds

KUNR Public Radio | By [Kaleb Roedel](#)
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Avi Kwa Ame National Monument protects roughly 500,000 acres of the Mojave Desert in southern Nevada, an area that is of great spiritual and cultural significance to tribal nations in the region.

A new report highlights how states in the West benefit from national monuments, which are waters and lands that are permanently protected.

In 2022, more than 300 million people visited public lands in the national park system, which includes many national monuments. That contributed over \$370,000 jobs and \$50

billion to local economies, [according to](#) the Mountain Pact, a coalition of elected officials across the West advocating for more national monuments.

So far, President Joe Biden has [designated five](#) new national monuments: Camp Hale-Continental Divide in north-central Colorado; Avi Kwa Ame in southern Nevada; Castner Range in Texas; Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon in Arizona; and Emmett and Mamie Till-Mobley in Illinois and Mississippi.

Taylor Patterson, a member of the Bishop Paiute Tribe and executive director of the Native Voters Alliance of Nevada, helped organize the Avi Kwa Ame national monument campaign.

“National monuments are a really great way for tribes to exercise stewardship over their lands, and be really involved in the conversation around their ancestral lands,” said Patterson, adding that the protections provide more than economic benefits. “To be able to have these areas that are just conserved lands and they're not up for development, they're not up for any of these mining projects or even solar projects, really helps bring down the effects of climate change.”

Yet, there are efforts being made to scale back monuments in the Mountain West. In Utah, for example, officials are [trying to slash](#) the acreage of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante.

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