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Western Local Elected Officials Call on President Biden to Meet His America the Beautiful Goals, Establish More National Monuments

Today, The Mountain Pact sent a [letter](#) to the Biden administration signed by over 115 Western state legislators, county commissioners, mayors, and council members from all eleven Western states. The letter thanks the administration for taking climate action and protecting our public lands through programs like the historic [America the Beautiful initiative](#). The letter applauds the administration's restoration of Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts national monuments and urges the President to use the Antiquities Act to protect more lands as national monuments.

The letter states, "As local elected officials, we are tasked with finding creative solutions to the many challenges that come with the ever-increasing popularity of our public lands; our growing infrastructure needs; lack of access to parks and open space by historically under-served communities; as well as the devastating and expensive impacts of climate change. With these reasons in mind, we ask you to use the Antiquities Act to protect more of our public lands by designating them as national monuments."

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact said, "We support the America the Beautiful initiative that includes goals to create a more inclusive and equitable vision of nature conservation, which better reflects our country's values and expands access to the outdoors for all. By uniting local governments, private landowners, Native American Tribes and Tribal communities, as well as historically underserved communities, this initiative will bring us all together to advance a shared vision of a better America. To do this, we need more protected public lands, including national monuments that build upon ongoing and often-untold stories of the true history of the United States."

Clark County, Nevada Commissioner Justin Jones said, "The COVID pandemic has shown us that access to public lands is more vital to our health and well-being than we ever thought as more and more people have gravitated to the outdoors close to home and ever-increasing numbers of visitors recreate on the public lands near our communities. Adding more protected lands through parks and public land, as well as having adequate funding to manage these lands would improve access and lessen overcrowding."

Mayor Torre of the City of Aspen, Colorado said, "In the face of climate change impacts and increased demand for outdoor recreational opportunities, Aspen is grateful to the Biden administration for protecting public lands across the west for future generations. Since 1980, Aspen has lost an entire month of winter and is experiencing dust on snow events and the impacts of drought, including severe wildfires, which threatens the vibrancy of Aspen's outdoor community and ski town way of life."

Grand County, Utah Commissioner Sarah Stock said, "I thank President Biden for restoring protections to Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. Increased drought, wildfires, flooding, dust on snow events, and record-setting temperatures have caused astronomical expenses for our communities and have negatively impacted our public health, land, water, and air quality while harming our agriculture, economies, and quality of life. Public lands are an integral part of the fabric of our mountain communities and a major driver of our local economies - we must protect more land."

Mayor Alan Webber of the City of Santa Fe, New Mexico said, "The Biden administration can reach the goal of protecting more nature by using the Antiquities Act to designate new national monuments proposed through locally and community-led efforts. This will ensure more equitable access to nature; address the climate crisis; restore America's biodiversity and wildlife; and begin to reckon with historic and present injustices."

Mayor Pro Tem Kassandra Gandara of the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico said, "I was honored to join with 115 other local elected officials in asking the administration to move swiftly to use its authority under the Antiquities Act to protect more natural, cultural, scientifically important, and historic sites, as they are the foundation of our strong economies and healthy citizenry."

The letter concludes with, "*The Antiquities Act conserves vital places so our stories can be told and experiences can be shared for generations to come. Please take action to protect more of our great public lands as national monuments through the use of the Antiquities Act to truly accomplish the America the Beautiful initiative.*"

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Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) mobilizes local elected officials in over 80 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.

MORE INFORMATION

See the full letter [here](#) or download it [here](#).

In 1906, in response to [looting](#) in the Southwest, Congress passed the [Antiquities Act](#). Since then, 16 presidents - eight Democratic and eight Republican - have established [158 national monuments](#). The Antiquities Act is responsible for protecting many of our most iconic and treasured public lands and waters like Grand Canyon National Park, Olympic National Park, Zion National Park, and Grand Teton National Park.

When a national monument is designated through the Antiquities Act, it is designated on land that is already owned by the American people. The Act does not confer authority on the President to take land from private landowners or from states. It simply increases the level of protection given to important cultural and scientific resources.

[Fossil fuel extraction on public lands generates 25% of our country's climate change causing emissions.](#) Yet, science has shown that conserving nature can provide over [one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed through 2030](#) to hold warming below 2°C.