

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Founded in 2014, The Mountain Pact educates, empowers, and mobilizes local elected officials in nearly 100 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.

Support for New National Monuments

One of the biggest efforts The Mountain Pact has been involved with over the past many years has been advocating for more national monuments to be designated by the President through the use of the Antiquities Act. During his presidency, President Biden has used the Antiquities Act to both restore and designate national monuments. He restored protections for [Bears Ears](#) and [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) national monuments in Utah, as well as [Northeast Canyons and Seamounts](#) National Monument. Last year he designated [Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument](#) in Colorado.

We started the year with an opinion piece in [The Hill](#) [calling on President Biden to designate more national monuments](#) - and he did! In 2023, President Biden designated four more national monuments.

THE HILL

OPINION > CONGRESS BLOG

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

President Biden should move to protect more nature by using the Antiquities Act

BY ANNA PETERSON, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 02/20/23 7:00 PM ET



Getty Images

Designations Avi Kwa Ame and Castner Range National Monuments

On Tuesday, March 21, at the [Conservation in Action Summit](#) in Washington, D.C., President Biden designated [Avi Kwa Ame](#) in southern Nevada and [Castner Range](#) in west Texas as national monuments. Together these two new monuments protect 513,486 acres and mark a significant step towards the Biden Administration meeting their America the Beautiful Initiative. You can watch the event [here](#).

- Castner Range [Fact Sheet](#) and [Proclamation](#)
- Avi Kwa Ame [Fact sheet](#) and [Proclamation](#)

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact, was invited to attend the Conservation Summit and was in attendance behind Senators Rosen, Cortez-Masto, and Representatives Titus, Lee, and Escobar! You can watch her video [here](#).





WHAT THEY ARE SAYING: President Biden Champions Conservation, Takes Action to Protect Lands and Waters

BRIFING ROOM • STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

Anna Peterson, Executive Director, The Mountain Pact: “We are thrilled that President Biden will permanently protect both Avi Kwa Ame and Castner Ranges’ landscapes’ natural, cultural, and historic values by designating them national monuments. The Antiquities Act conserves vital places so our stories can be told and experiences can be shared for generations to come. We celebrate today and tomorrow we will continue to urge President Biden to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect more places with cultural and scientific significance as national monuments.” [Statement, 3/21/23]

Michael Naft, Commissioner, Clark County, Nevada: “We are grateful President Biden has designated Avi Kwa Ame National Monument today. This area in Clark County is rich in both history, wildlife, and beauty. For years, Tribes, local elected officials, community leaders, and businesses have supported the creation of a national monument because protecting the area is both the right thing to do but also the economically beneficial approach. Nearby communities like Searchlight and Laughlin will benefit from the financial impact of achieving monument status.” [Statement, 3/21/23]

The Mountain Pact sent out this media [release](#) on the designations of Avi Kwa Ame and Castner Range national monuments which had quotes from many western local elected officials that were included in the White House’s [What They are Saying](#) wrap up.

We had a [Mountain Pact ad run](#) in the [Las Vegas Review Journal](#) and [Reno Gazette Journal](#) thanking President Biden; Senators Cortez Masto and Rosen; and Representatives Titus and Lee for protecting and designating Avi Kwa Ame.


**LAS VEGAS
REVIEW-JOURNAL**

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL Sunday, March 26, 2023 15A

PAID ADVOCACY ADVERTISEMENT


THANK YOU

**President Biden,
Senator Cortez Masto,
Senator Rosen,
Congresswoman Titus,
and Congresswoman Lee!**



**Local community leaders
thank you for designating
Avi Kwa Ame
National Monument!**

Photo: Alan O'Neill




Paid for by The Mountain Pact

reno gazette journal

8A | SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2023 | RENO GAZETTE JOURNAL


THANK YOU

**President Biden,
Senator Cortez Masto,
Senator Rosen,
Congresswoman Titus,
and Congresswoman Lee!**



**Local community leaders
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National Monument!**

Photo: Alan O'Neill



Paid for by The Mountain Pact

Cark County, Nevada Commissioner Michael Naft and Chair of the Eagle County, Colorado Board of County Commissioners Kathy Chandler-Henry penned an opinion piece in the Vail Daily and the Nevada Independent celebrating the designations Camp Hale-Continental Divide and Avi Kwa Ame national monuments – national monuments in their communities.



New monuments a great start. Let's do more

Michael Naft Kathy Chandler-Henry May 5th, 2023 at 2:00 AM

Opinion

SHARE



ughile on Friday, Dec. 8, 2023 (Jeff Scheid/The Nevada



<https://www.vaildaily.com/opinion/guest-opinion-we-must-preserve-vital-public-lands-for-future-generations/>

Guest opinion: We must preserve vital public lands for future generations

Opinion **OPINION** |

Kathy Chandler-Henry and Michael Naft

Guest Opinion



President Joe Biden speaks Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2022, at the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument signing ceremony. The monument honors the legacy of the 10th Mountain Division soldiers who trained there to fight in Italy in World War II. *Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily*

Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument

On July 25, on what would have been Emmett Till's 82nd birthday, President Biden [designated](#) Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument. In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till's kidnapping & murder, along with the courageous response of his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, to hold an open casket funeral for her son, catalyzed the American Civil Rights Movement. The monument in their honor spans three sites in Illinois and Mississippi, marking locations that are a crucial and powerful part of America's civil rights history.



President Biden Signs Proclamation to Establish Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument

discovered.

The monument's locations include Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago, Illinois where Mamie Till-Mobley held an open casket visitation and funeral for her son; Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Mississippi, where the September 1955 trial of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant for Emmett Till's murder took place; and Graball Landing at the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi, where Emmett Till's body was

[The Mountain Pact released this statement in support of the designation.](#)

- [Proclamation](#)
- [White House Fact Sheet](#)
- [Designation Video](#)

Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument

There has also been a decades long Tribally-led push for a national monument near the Grand Canyon. The Mountain Pact released this [statement](#) supporting the Tribal push for President Biden to designate the monument. After Secretary Deb Haaland held a meeting to hear from tribal leaders on the need to protect more land around the Grand Canyon, we released a [statement](#) reflecting our support of this meeting and the designation. Similarly, we released a [statement](#) supporting the BLM and USFS hosting a public listening session on proposed monument.

Then, on August 8, President Biden designated the [Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni - Ancestral Footprints of Grand Canyon National Monument](#) in Arizona. This action will protect lands around the Grand Canyon region and watershed, which has cultural connections to at least 12 Tribes and Nations. Indigenous people have inhabited and stewarded these

lands since time immemorial. Many cultural resources and sites that are significant and sacred to Native peoples remain in the area, serve as their libraries and records, and testify to their continuous presence. There are at least 2,535 formally documented cultural resources across the monument, while many thousands more are likely to exist. You can see a map of the new monument [here](#). We released [this statement](#) in support of the monument designation.

- [Proclamation](#)
- [White House Fact Sheet](#)



We celebrate these commemorations and we continue to urge President Biden to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect more places with cultural and scientific significance as national monuments. We urge him to honor the 1908 Springfield Race Riot in Illinois; the Historic Greenwood District/Black Wall Street in Tulsa; Dolores Canyon in Colorado; the Great Bend of the Gila in Arizona; Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon; Mimbres Peak in New Mexico; and Chuckwalla and Sáttítla - the Medicine Lake Highlands in California. We also encourage him to expand national monuments like San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, as well as Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument to include Molok Luyuk, both in California.

- In response to [Secretary Deb Haaland](#) and the [Bureau of Land Management](#) visiting Berryessa National Monument & the potential expansion area Molok Luyuk, and the launch of a Chuckwalla National Monument effort we released this [statement](#). We also release this supportive [statement](#) in response to the [community listening session](#) for the Berryessa National Monument and the potential expansion area Molok Luyuk that took place in California on December 13.
- We also shared our support for the [San Gabriel Mountains National Monument expansion with this statement](#) and we responded with this [statement](#) in response to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service great community listening session for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument expansion public meeting in California on November 7.

We have a larger report coming out in January detailing established monuments in western states, recently designated monuments, and potential monuments.

Bureau of Land Management

Support for the Proposed Public Lands Rule

The Mountain Pact responded to the [Bureau of Land Management Proposed Public Land Rule Comment Period](#) announcement with a [release and statements](#) from local elected officials across the west.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, March 30, 2023
CONTACT: Anna Peterson, Anna@TheMountainPact.Org

Western Local Elected Officials Respond to Bureau of Land Management Announcement

Today, The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with local elected officials across the West, responded to an [announcement](#) from the Department of Interior of a "Public Lands Rule lays groundwork for conserving wildlife habitat, restoring places impacted by wildfire and drought, expanding outdoor recreation, and thoughtful development."

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of [The Mountain Pact](#) said, "Over 120 local elected officials from western states have called on the Biden administration to protect more Bureau of Land Management lands as part of the administration's America the Beautiful initiative. We look forward to the BLM using this rulemaking process to conserve and protect our nation's important public lands, [wildlife](#) and waters in tandem with locally-led efforts to advance conservation across the west."

Santa Fe County Commission Chair Anna Hansen said, "The destruction of petroglyphs within the Caja del Rio ACEC should be a call-to-action for the BLM. It is time to ensure that no further damage is done, and I am hopeful we can honor the stewardship of the Puebloan people and protect these areas for generations to come."

Chaffee County, Colorado County Commissioner Keith Baker said, "When used wisely, the Bureau of Land Management conservation mechanisms will support our local economies, tourism, and outdoor recreation as well as provide certainty for our rural and gateway communities so we can make long-term investments. We look forward to this rule-making process and modernizing management policies to allow for increased recreational opportunities and access to nature."

City of Flagstaff Council Member, Jim McCarthy said, "Many of our Western communities are being devastated by the impacts of the climate crisis. As a result, many of the areas important to Westerners and visitors are at risk of being unnecessarily degraded or lost, especially since many of the BLM lands in our communities are not permanently protected. We hope that through this rulemaking process, as the largest land manager in the nation, the Bureau of Land Management will play a leading role in protecting more of these lands and waters, and in turn, our communities for the future."

Nevada State Assemblyman Howard Watts said, "Many of our communities are located near Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, which include traditional homelands of Indigenous populations, vital watersheds for downstream communities, and outstanding fish and wildlife habitat. They also provide outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation, including camping, hiking, paddling, hunting and fishing. I was happy to join with over [100 of my colleagues](#) in encouraging the BLM and the administration to do more to protect these important places and we hope the BLM will work with communities across the state to implement these new rules in upcoming plans."

In an [opinion piece in the Durango Herald](#), The Mountain Pact urged the BLM to manage BLM lands to maintain, improve, conserve, and restore degraded fish and wildlife habitat to increase habitat connectivity.

THE Durango HERALD

<https://www.durangoherald.com/articles/need-blm-to-prioritize-wildlife-habitat-migration-corridors/>

Need BLM to prioritize wildlife habitat, migration corridors

Wednesday, Jan 11, 2023 4:30 AM

In Southwest Colorado, we are fortunate to be located near many Bureau of Land Management lands, where residents and visitors recreate, camp, view wildlife, hunt and fish. Thanks to the remote nature of the area and the San Juan Mountains, we are lucky to have some of the best habitat for wildlife, such as mountain lions, bears, mule deer, elk, moose – even threatened species like the Canada lynx – and the endangered wolverine and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse.

84 Colorado local elected officials urged the BLM to “prioritize the conservation of our shared public lands” via a [letter](#) in May, 2023. This was covered by the [Colorado Newsline](#), [Ark Valley Voice](#), [Vail Daily](#), and [Summit Daily](#).



Tuesday, May 23, 2023

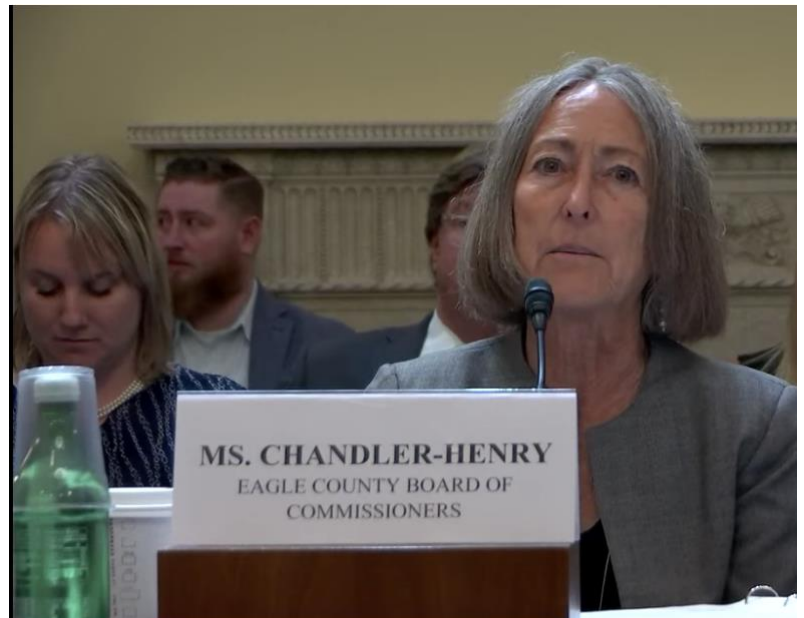
Doug Vilsack, State Director
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield St.
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

Dear State Director Vilsack,

Colorado's public lands are deeply valued by its people because they provide important [health and economic benefits](#). [The 8.3 million acres of federal public lands within Colorado that are overseen by the Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\)](#) are particularly important. These lands support a diverse array of outdoor recreation activities and create jobs through the tourism sector that are the backbone of many of our communities. They also provide important wildlife habitat and corridors, which are integral to an [intact ecosystem that make it easier for species to adapt](#) to climate change.

As local elected officials in Colorado, we would like to express our commitment to protecting these landscapes which provide so much to our communities. We commend BLM on recent agency guidance that prioritizes the health of public lands and encourage the BLM to continue to place conservation at the forefront of the rulemaking that will occur in 2023.

Chair of the Eagle County, Colorado Commission [Kathy Chandler Henry had an op-ed run in the Colorado Sun](#) and the [Aspen Times](#) in which she explains why she [testified](#) in front of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources in support of the BLM's proposed Public Lands Rule. Her testimony was covered by the [Vail Daily](#).



THE ASPENTIMES SNOWMASS SUN

<https://www.aspentimes.com/opinion/chandler-henry-blm-needs-conservation-rule/>

Chandler-Henry: BLM needs conservation rule

Opinion | Jul 10, 2023



Kathy Chandler-Henry

I recently testified at a U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources hearing in Washington, D.C., to express my support for the [Bureau of Land Management's proposed Public Lands Rule](#).



<https://coloradosun.com/2023/07/10/public-lands-conservation-blm-rule-opinion/>

OPINION COLUMNS

Opinion: On public lands, conservation is just as valuable as extraction

The BLM's proposed Public Lands Rule will help balance the demands on natural resources with protecting our mountain ecosystem



[Kathy Chandler-Henry](#)

1:30 AM MDT on Jul 10, 2023

Chair of the Chaffee County, Colorado County Commission Keith Baker had an [opinion piece](#) in the Ark Valley Voice on the Bureau of Land Management's draft Public Lands Rule.



<https://arkvalleyvoice.com/guest-opinion-blm-public-land-rule-comment-period-is-open/>

GUEST OPINION: BLM PUBLIC LAND RULE COMMENT PERIOD IS OPEN

Coloradans deeply value our public lands, not only because they provide important health and economic benefits, but also because they make our beautiful state what it is. The 8.3 million acres of federally-managed public lands within Colorado that are overseen by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are particularly important.



Board of County Commissioners
Marsha Porter-Norton, Chair
Matt Salka, Vice Chair
Clyde Church, Commissioner

1101 East 2nd Ave
Durango, CO 81301
(970)382-6219

[La Plata County wrote a letter in support of the proposed BLM rule](#)

June 13, 2023

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: PRA Office
via email at: BLM_HQ_PRA_Comments@blm.gov

RE: OMB Control Number 1004-0NEW and RIN 1004-AE92
BLM Proposed rule for Conservation and Landscape Health (88 FR 19583)

Dear Bureau of Land Management:

La Plata County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule for Conservation and Landscape Health. This proposed rule will promote restoration of lands and waters, provide for balanced, responsible development; and conserve the best intact, healthy landscapes.

La Plata County supports this step towards fostering conservation, ensuring the health of our landscapes, and promoting equity in land management practices. This proposed rule emphasizes landscape health and ecological integrity for safeguarding the long-term sustainability on our natural resources. Incorporating strategies for habitat restoration, wildlife conservation, and sustainable land use practices will balance multiple objectives including the preservation of biodiversity, migration of climate change impacts, and responsible use of public lands for various purposes.

We appreciate that this proposed rule supports efforts to protect and restore public lands; and we emphatically support that the proposed rule clarifies that conservation is a use on par with the multiple uses and sustained yield mission of our public lands under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

La Plata County strongly supports this rule and appreciates the opportunity to comment.

We also joined conservation organizations on a [comment letter](#) supporting the BLM rule and submitted our comments for the BLM Public Lands Rule Comment period.

The Mountain Pact Urges BLM to Prioritize Protection of Shared Public Lands

arkvalleyvoice.com/the-mountain-pact-urges-blm-to-prioritize-protection-of-shared-public-lands/

By Jan Wondra

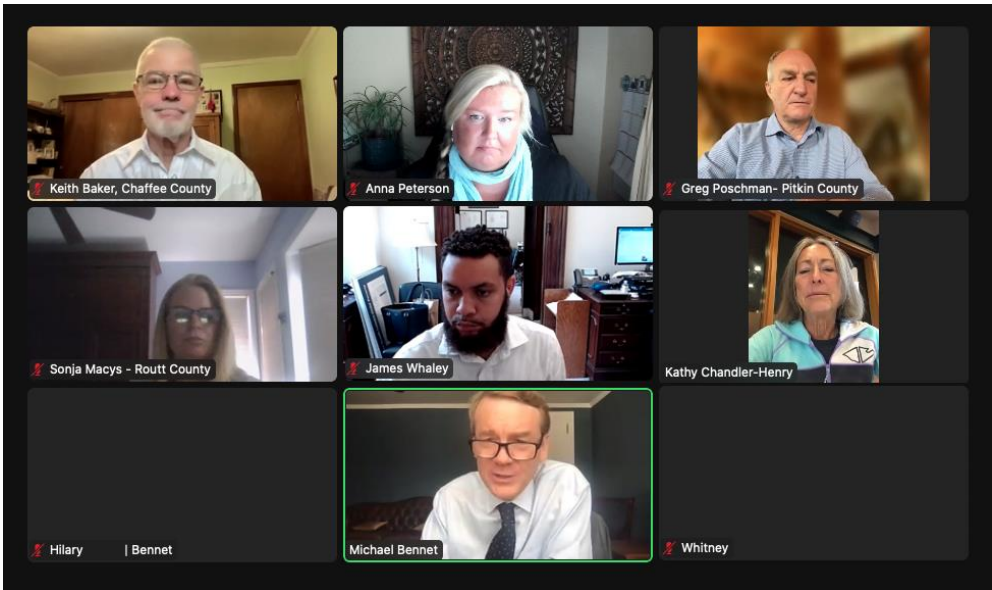
May 24, 2023



View over the Arkansas River toward the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness. Photo EcoFlight.

More than 80 Colorado Local Elected Officials Urge the Bureau of Land Management to Prioritize the Conservation of our Shared Public Lands

We shared our support for the Bureau of Land Management's proposed Public Lands Rule with Senator Bennet in a meeting with Colorado county commissioners from Pitkin, Eagle, Routt, and Chaffee counties.



California Specifics

The Town of Truckee submitted a [letter](#) and Truckee Vice Mayor and Co-Owner of Tahoe Mountain Sports Dave Polivy had an op-ed supportive of the proposed BLM Public Lands Rule in the [Sierra Sun](#).



Karen Mouritsen, State Director
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) California State Office
2800 Cottage Way Suite W1623
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear State Director Mouritsen,

As California elected officials, we write to express our support for protecting the millions of acres of wildlands managed by the Bureau of Land Management in our state. We commend BLM on its recent guidance and [draft public lands rule](#) that prioritizes the conservation of wildlife, natural and cultural resources, and encourages tribal co-stewardship. The State of California and the Biden Administration have made bold conservation commitments to aggressively address the climate and nature crisis and the California state office must play a significant role in helping meet these goals. We encourage you to do all you can to address climate change and protect our remaining wild public lands.

California offers an incredible diversity of natural landscapes and ecosystems that need to be protected for future generations. Encompassing rangelands, high mountains, expansive deserts, and rocky shores, many of these places fall within the boundaries of the [15 million acres managed by the BLM](#) within the state. These scenic landscapes help drive [California's outdoor recreation economy](#), which contributes over 500,000 jobs and over \$50 billion to the state economy. They provide essential ecological benefits, and support the state's economy and culture.

The [Federal Land Policy and Management Act](#) requires the BLM to "give priority" to the designation and protection of [Areas of Critical Environmental Concern](#) (ACECs), which are areas of public lands that contain outstanding ecological, cultural, natural, or other values. The designation of such areas is key to protecting vulnerable California public lands. The proposed rule strengthens existing agency policy by including new ACEC regulations and the final rule should further specify how ACECs will be prioritized, as required by FLPMA. The rule should ensure that all eligible areas are designated. The final rule should also



FREE | Vol. 153, No. 46

Friday, June 16, 2023

Opinion

Share your opinion: Letters@SierraSun.com

The Sierra Sun accepts letters and op-ed submissions and will be published at the discretion of the editor. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length and accuracy. Submissions must include author's name, hometown and phone number (for verification of authorship). Letters are limited to 300 words. Guest columns are limited to 750 words.

10 | Friday, June 16, 2023 | Sierra Sun

We must protect our tremendous assets – public lands

Our nation's protected public lands are tremendous assets to our western communities. They play a critical role in our way of life and support our businesses, outdoor recreation and tourism economies, as well as our communities' health and well-being. Moreover, by permanently



David Polivy

the devastating impacts of

protecting more public lands, we can sequester carbon, make areas more resilient, and mitigate

climate change — something Californians are all dealing with daily.

California offers an incredible diversity of natural landscapes and ecosystems that need to be protected for future generations. Encompassing rangelands, high mountains, expansive deserts,

Ahead of the public meeting in late May in Albuquerque on the conservation centric rulemaking that the BLM has proposed, [we released these statements from New Mexico elected officials from Taos, Doña Ana & Santa Fe counties, as well as the cities of Albuquerque and Las Cruces](#) expressing their support for the adoption of a strong Public Land Rule. New Mexico Local Elected Officials submitted a [letter](#) supporting the Rule.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, May 30 , 2023

CONTACT: Anna Peterson, Anna@TheMountainPact.Org

New Mexico Local Elected Officials Urge Bureau of Land Management to Prioritize the Conservation of our Shared Public Lands

Durango, Colorado: Ahead of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed Public Land Rule public meeting in Albuquerque on Tuesday night, [The Mountain Pact](#), an organization that works with local elected officials across the West, released the following statements from New Mexico Local elected officials urging the BLM to prioritize the conservation of our shared public lands. On March 30, the Department of Interior [announced](#) a draft "Public Lands Rule which lays the groundwork for conserving wildlife habitat, restoring places impacted by wildfire and drought, expanding outdoor recreation, and thoughtful development." The public meeting is the third of five.

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of [The Mountain Pact](#) said, "Last year we had [over 120 local elected officials from western states](#) call on the Biden administration to protect more Bureau of Land Management lands as part of the administration's America the Beautiful initiative. Now New Mexico local elected officials are looking forward to the BLM using this rulemaking process to conserve and protect our nation's important public lands, [wildlife](#) and waters in tandem with locally-led efforts to advance conservation across New Mexico."

Santa Fe County Commission Chair Anna Hansen said, "The world class hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities Bureau of Land Management lands provide New Mexicans, and our state's culture, heritage and way-of-life are forever connected to these protected lands. In Santa Fe County, the destruction of petroglyphs within the Caja del Rio Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) should be a call-to-action for the Bureau of Land Management. It is time to ensure that no further damage is done, and I am hopeful a strong Public Lands Rule from the BLM can honor the stewardship of the Puebloan people and protect these areas for generations to come." -

Albuquerque, New Mexico City Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn said, "The lands that are overseen by the Bureau of Land Management within New Mexico include some of the most stunning in the country and play a critical role in helping New Mexico remain the "land of enchantment." I commend the Bureau of Land Management on the recent agency guidance that prioritizes the health of public lands and places conservation at the forefront of the proposed Public Lands Rule. This is the direction we must pursue to maintain our vital public lands in the future."

City of Las Cruces Council Member Becky Corran said, "As a Las Cruces City Councilor, I am committed to protecting our Bureau of Land Management lands like National Monuments, National Scenic and Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Areas because they are important to all aspects of life within New Mexico. Our BLM lands provide so much to communities like Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Our desert,

mountains and river are the heart of Las Cruces and deserve protection. I urge the BLM to prioritize the conservation of our shared public lands that emphasizes ecological integrity, preservation of vulnerable resources, and maintaining access to outdoor recreation."

Taos County, New Mexico County Commissioner Darlene Vigil said, "Bureau of Land Management lands hold cultural significance, provide recreational opportunities, contribute to the economy, and sustain the natural ecosystems that support a healthy environment in New Mexico. In Taos County, Bureau of Land Management lands like Río Grande del Norte National Monument are so important to residents and visitors. The mighty river and dramatic gorge often welcome many visitors to our community. New Mexico's public lands will continue to benefit from increased protections and the BLM must adopt a strong Public Lands Rule to accelerate the scope and pace of conservation.

Doña Ana County, New Mexico County Commissioner and Vietnam Veteran Shannon Reynolds, said, "Our county is grateful to have many Bureau of Land Management lands, including two national monuments, right in our backyard. Our local and regional economy has greatly benefited from the increased tourism generated by these national treasures. Every day residents enjoy being able to recreate, rejuvenate, and recuperate in BLM lands so close to home. I'm encouraged by the proposed Public Lands Rule and hope that the agency will adopt a strong rule that will further protect public lands both because they add a competitive economic advantage in southern New Mexico but also so that future generations may enjoy them as we have.

###

Santa Fe County, New Mexico Commissioner Anna Hansen's op-ed [ran in the Santa Fe New Mexican](#), which encourages a strong enactment of the BLM's proposed rule to support conservation on public lands.

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/commentary/blm-should-enact-a-strong-public-lands-rule/article_66811f0-1566-11ee-ab5d-47c1cb4c0c3.html

BLM should enact a strong public lands rule

COMMENTARY ANNA HANSEN
By Anna Hansen Jan 30, 2023

The lands overseen by the Bureau of Land Management within New Mexico include some of the most stunning in the country. These national monuments, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness Areas are important to all aspects of life within New Mexico as they hold cultural significance, provide recreational opportunities, contribute to the economy and sustain the natural ecosystems that support a healthy environment.

The BLM manages 13.5 million acres in New Mexico, yet only 2.5% are durably protected. New Mexico's public lands would benefit from increased protections, and as the chair of the Santa Fe County Commission, I commend the BLM on the announcement it will modernize management to promote healthy landscapes, abundant wildlife, clean drinking water and balanced decision-making. I thank the agency for holding a public meeting in Albuquerque.

This proposed "Public Land Rule" clarifies that conservation, which includes restoration and protection, is a multiple use within the agency's management framework on par with other uses such as development, and will ensure America's public lands can be managed to sustain their health, diversity and productivity for current and future generations.

Other Work on Public Lands, Oil and Gas, and Climate

- In response to the BLM announcing that they are proposing to revise the agency's oil and gas leasing regulations, we released [this statement](#).
- [The Mountain Pact reaffirmed our support of Laura Daniel-Davis in a statement](#) to be an Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. We urged the Senate to finally confirm her as swiftly as possible and then [supported](#) the news that she had been named acting deputy secretary.
- The Mayor of Aspen and the Town of Basalt, Colorado sent a [letter](#) to the U.S. Forest Service in support of the Thompson Divide Withdrawal.



June 23, 2023

RE: Thompson Divide Withdrawal #63679
Elysia Retzlaff, R2 - Rocky Mountain Region All Units
Scott Fitzwilliams, White River Forest Supervisor
Chad Stewart, GMUG Forest Supervisor
1617 Cole Boulevard
Building 17
Lakewood, CO 80401-3305

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

The Thompson Divide is a largely intact landscape and is highly prized by hunters and anglers, ranchers and recreationalists of all kinds. It provides key grazing allotments, high-value wildlife habitat, and clean water that supplies municipal, domestic, and agricultural users. The area contains diverse, abundant native species and natural communities, as well as extensive, intact, and interconnected habitats. Existing uses in the Thompson Divide support hundreds of jobs and tens of millions in annual economic activity and bolster our towns' recreation-based economies. The Divide embodies the rural and wild character of western Colorado and encompasses more than a dozen inventoried roadless areas. It is well-suited to its current uses, but is threatened with potential oil and gas development and a lack of permanent protection.

The CORE Act was reintroduced on May 17th and we joined others from across the state of Colorado in [support of the bill](#).



"Over the past few years, public lands have been a bright spot in our nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with residents and visitors finding solace in the outdoors more than ever. Following the designation of the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument, it is now time for Congress to finish the job and pass the CORE Act in its entirety. So many of Colorado's local elected officials are excited to see all the places within the CORE Act protected by Congress in 2023. We are grateful to Senator Bennet and Representative Neguse, along with Senators Hickenlooper and Representatives Crow, Pettersen, Caraveo, and Degette for re-introducing this critical piece of legislation for Colorado and our county."

Anna Peterson, Executive Director, The Mountain Pact

"As a long-time supporter of many of the individual components of the CORE Act, such as the San Juan Wilderness component that dates back more than a decade, I'm thrilled to hear the Act is being re-introduced," said **Ridgway, Colorado Mayor John Clark**. "Let's finally get it across the finish line!"

Town of Avon, Colorado Mayor Amy Phillips said, "Public lands are the backbone of our mountain communities and the CORE Act includes significant protections for many Colorado public lands. We are still celebrating the designation of Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument which protected some lands in the CORE Act and I'm so glad the bill has been re-introduced. Once passed, it will protect more important landscapes for our communities."

The Mountain Pact joined Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, the Vet Voice Foundation, Hispanic Access Foundation, and the National Wildlife Federation on a [letter](#) to the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee expressing our support to fully fund important programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Bureau of Land Management's National Conservation Lands. We urged their support for fully funding these key programs that benefit millions of Americans as they mark-up the FY24 Interior Appropriations bill and to avoid taking on partisan policy riders.

June 28, 2023

Senator Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As your subcommittee's markup of the FY24 Interior Appropriations bill approaches, we write to express our strong support for several programs in your jurisdiction as well as our opposition to new policy riders that, if included, would greatly complicate passage of this important bill.

Although we acknowledge your subcommittee's allocation this year will require some tough decisions on your part, we believe the programs listed below demonstrate their value each year by improving the quality of life for tens of millions of people in communities across the country. We strongly encourage the subcommittee to fund the important priorities below to at least at the levels contained in the President's budget request and to oppose new policy riders that would undermine conservation.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) advances federal, state, and local efforts to conserve irreplaceable lands and expands access to the outdoors in communities across the country. We appreciate your work in FY23 to fully invest in LWCF and continue the long-standing bipartisan support for LWCF. We urge you to ensure we build on LWCF's record of success in FY24 by including specific project lists, providing a balanced allocation among programs, and protecting prior-year funds from rescissions.

We joined conservation organizations on a comment [letter](#) supporting the BLM and USDA advancing conservation goals on forest lands to protect mature forests and trees.

In partnership with Colorado Wildlands Project and Wilderness Workshop, we submitted a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Land Management - Colorado, signed by over 25 local elected officials who represent communities in the Colorado River Valley or Grand Junction BLM Field office regions. These local elected officials urged the BLM to adopt a management proposal alternative in the draft SEIS that provides a more balanced approach to public lands management for the region. Doing so will protect some of our communities' critical water resources, Indigenous cultural sites, important wildlife habitat, and treasured recreation areas.



Greg Larson
BLM District Manager
Attn: Supplemental EIS
2518 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506

CC: Doug Vilsack
BLM Colorado State Director
PO Box 151029
Lakewood, CO 80215

Senator Michael Bennet, Senator John Hickenlooper, Representative Joe Neguse

Dear Mr. Larsen,

The below listed local elected officials, who represent communities within the Colorado River Valley and Grand Junction Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Offices, are writing to urge adoption of the management proposed in Alternative F of the [draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement \(SEIS\)](#), which provides a more balanced approach to public lands management for the region. Doing so will protect some of our communities' critical water resources, Indigenous cultural sites, important wildlife habitat, and treasured recreation areas.

Many of the BLM lands located in our region are favorites for visitors and residents alike for camping, fishing, mountain biking, and hiking. Yet, many of these areas were left open to oil and gas leasing in the previous Resource Management Plans for the Colorado River Valley and Grand Junction Field Offices. We applaud the BLM for listening to the voices of our communities during the scoping portion of this process and developing [Alternative F](#), which proposes closing lands with no, low, and medium oil and gas potential in addition to other high value recreation and conservation lands like Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and Special Recreation Management Areas to new oil and gas development, while simultaneously proposing important new conservation protections for wildlands and wildlife.

Some examples of special areas that Alternative F proposes closing to oil and gas that should be incorporated into the final plan include:

As Congress continues work on FY24 appropriations, we joined other organizations on a [FY24 Appropriations Conservation Priorities Letter](#) to the Senate outlining key funding priorities as well as highlighting concerns around House-included riders that would undermine conservation and national monuments.

December 13, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair, Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Collins, Chair Merkley, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write to express our general support for *S.2605 The Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2024*. The Senate bill's funding levels for critical environment, public lands, conservation, and wildlife programs, though insufficient for the long-term, represent a bipartisan compromise that is significantly better than the bill passed by the House and should be defended as bicameral negotiations progress.

As we detail below, there are important items in *S. 2605* that deserve special attention and protection, and, just as importantly, scores of poison pill riders included in the House companion bill that must be kept out of both the Senate bill and any final Senate-House agreement on this legislation.. These provisions, which helped trigger a veto threat of the House bill from the Biden-Harris Administration, would undermine decades of bipartisan progress on critical programs that are supported and enjoyed by millions of people in this country each year.

PROTECT IMPORTANT CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The Senate version of the FY24 Interior appropriations bill contains many provisions that are important to conserving and protecting our public lands and wildlife. Three of the most critical are:

Thank you for your participation and partnership with
The Mountain Pact in 2023!



We look forward to working with you in 2024.

www.TheMountainPact.org