

Fast Facts and Q&A

Both Designations -- Q&A

What is the effect of the President's proclamations?

The President's two proclamations designate the Bears Ears National Monument and Gold Butte National Monument, comprised entirely of existing federal lands. These designations direct the responsible agencies to manage these areas for the care and management of objects of scientific and historic interest identified by the proclamations. The areas generally may not be disposed of by the United States and are closed to new extractive uses such as mining and oil and gas development, and subject to valid existing rights. The designations preserve current uses of the land, including tribal access and traditional collection of plants and firewood, off-highway vehicle recreation, hunting and fishing, legal grazing, military training operations, and utility corridors.

Site Specific Q&A - Gold Butte National Monument

Gold Butte National Monument

- Nearly 300,000 acres in Clark County, Nevada, currently managed by the BLM and the Bureau of Reclamation
- The monument will be managed by the BLM

What kind of public process took place before this designation was made?

Beginning in 2008, when Representative Shelley Berkley (D-1-NV) first introduced legislation to establish a more than 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Conservation Area, legislation to provide lasting protection for the larger Gold Butte area has been introduced repeatedly. Most recently, in 2015 Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) and Representative Dina Titus (D-1-NV) introduced S. 199 and H.R. 856, the Gold Butte National Conservation Area Act. On a number of occasions, including in a floor speech on April 7, 2016, Senator Reid stated his desire that the President use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect the Gold Butte area. Deputy Secretary of the Interior Michael Connor and BLM Director Neil Kornze attended a [public meeting](#) hosted by Senator Reid and Representative Titus on February 18, 2015, to hear from the public about protection and conservation of Gold Butte and other areas in Southern Nevada. Many members of the overflow crowd of more than 300 people spoke in support of protecting the Gold Butte area, including representatives from local tribal nations, the travel and tourism industry, local business owners, recreationists, professional and amateur scientists, and state and local elected officials. In 2011, at the request of Senator Reid, then-Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Hayes and Director Kornze (while serving as Senior Advisor to the BLM Director) traveled to the area to witness firsthand its natural and cultural values. During that trip, Deputy Secretary Hayes and Director Kornze held a meeting in Mesquite, Nevada, where they and approximately 50 local citizens, elected officials, and conservation advocates discussed possible protection for the Gold Butte area. Later that year, Deputy Secretary Hayes held a roundtable at the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce where local elected and appointed officials and stakeholders discussed the economic benefits that could be generated by national recognition of Gold Butte and other public lands in the region.

Where is the Gold Butte National Monument?

The Gold Butte National Monument encompasses approximately 285,000 acres of Federal lands currently managed by the BLM and approximately 12,000 acres currently managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (which the proclamation directs for transfer to the BLM under applicable law) approximately 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas. The total acreage under federal management is 296,937 acres. Approximately 57,000 acres within the boundary are currently managed by the BLM or USBR as Congressionally-designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas, natural lands without roads which provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. Another 129,000 acres have been formally proposed as Wilderness by local land managers after completing a wilderness study. The entire monument falls within Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, which are managed for the protection of their outstanding cultural, natural, and scenic values.

What is the effect of the President's proclamation?

The President's proclamation designates federal lands in this area as the Gold Butte National Monument for the care and management of objects of scientific and historic interest and to help ensure that future generations can enjoy these significant lands as they are today. The area generally may not be disposed of by the United States and is closed to new extractive uses such as mining and oil and gas development and subject to valid existing rights, including water rights. The proclamation allows for the operation and maintenance of a small number of existing facilities and infrastructure within the monument, but does not allow new rights of way across the monument unless necessary for the care and management of monument objects.

How do these designations compare to Sen Reid's legislation, both in terms of boundaries and management?

Senator Reid's legislation, S. 199 in the 114th Congress, would have designated a Gold Butte National Conservation Area. The NCA's boundary would extend further north than the monument's boundary, and would have been almost 350,000 acres compared to the monument's nearly 300,000 acres. Like the monument, the NCA's management plan would incorporate the current transportation plan for the area, although the monument proclamation allows more flexibility for trails. Like the monument, the bill would not affect the jurisdiction of the State with respect to fish and wildlife, including fishing and hunting. Like the monument proclamation, the bill establishes an advisory council of local stakeholders. Both the legislation and the monument proclamation allow for military training operations. Both also allow for Native American cultural and religious uses. Unlike the proclamation, the Senator's legislation authorizes a visitor center and field office. Senator Reid's legislation would have also created a number of new wilderness areas that are not established by the monument designation.

How does the designation affect military uses of the land and airspace?

Nothing in the proclamation precludes low-level overflights of military aircraft, designation of new units of special use airspace, or the use or establishment of military flight training routes over the lands reserved by the proclamation, consistent with the care and management of the objects to be protected. Additionally, the proclamation allows air or ground access to existing or new electronic tracking communications sites associated with the special use airspace and military training routes, consistent with the care and management of the monument objects.

How does the designation impact public access?

The designation preserves public access, such as for hunting and fishing, which continue to be managed by the State of Nevada. Traditional tribal collection of certain natural materials will still be allowed in the monument, as will access for other cultural uses. Visitors may continue to use motorized vehicles and non-motorized mechanized vehicles (e.g. mountain bikes) on roads and trails designated as open for their use.

How does designation impact access to water district infrastructure or other existing facilities within the monument?

The designation explicitly allows for the use and maintenance of existing flood control, pipeline, and telecommunications facilities, or other water infrastructure including wildlife guzzlers or water district facilities, but stipulates that such uses must be managed in a manner consistent with the care and management of monument objects.

How will the BLM incorporate local input into the monument management plan?

The proclamation requires the Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, to prepare and maintain a management plan for the monument. The plan will be developed with maximum public involvement including, but not limited to, consultation with tribal, state, and local governments. As part of that process, the BLM will hold public meetings on Gold Butte National Monument. The proclamation also requires the Secretary to establish an advisory committee to provide information and advice regarding development of the land use plan and management of the monument, to allow for continued participation by local stakeholders in the process.

How does the designation impact off-highway vehicle use?

The designation will not impact current OHV use, but limits motorized vehicle use to roads designated as open as of the date of the proclamation except for emergency or authorized administrative purposes, unless the Secretary decides to reroute them for public safety purposes or to enhance protection of the monument objects. Preserving the current designations honors the hard work and lengthy public process that went into the development of the existing 2008 travel management plan.

How does the designation impact grazing?

Livestock grazing has not been permitted in the monument area since 1998, and the proclamation does not allow for any new grazing permits or leases within the monument.

Did the Administration push forward on this monument in response, or at least in part, to the showdown at Bunkerville in 2014?

Today's action is in response to longstanding efforts to protect the area's important cultural and natural resources. Legislative efforts to protect the area started in 2002.

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