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Subject: DCN: EST-00003211 - Antiquities Act
Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 5:09:55 PM
Attachments: [3211.in.pdf](#)

Tasked to OCL

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United States Senate

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June 9, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of Interior
Mail Stop 6242
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Secretary Zinke:

On April 26, 2017, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order (EO) 13792, which requires a thorough review of national monuments created under the Antiquities Act, a bedrock law signed by President Teddy Roosevelt in 1906 to safeguard and preserve federal lands and cultural and historical sites for all Americans to enjoy. Included in this review are two monuments in Nevada, Gold Butte and Basin and Range, which meet the specified criteria and, thus, are subject to this ongoing review process.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you a statement on both of these monuments that not only share widespread public support, but also help to create a resilient economy for the great state of Nevada. You know, especially as a former member of Congress, that consequential decisions that would forever impact the integrity of protected natural areas must be made with the full consent of the state, congressional delegation, tribal nations, and key stakeholders.

Nevada has the most public lands than any other state and due to our abundance of natural resources, we have led the way in creating consensus at the local and state level and among our delegation to both benefit our communities and protect our natural areas. In fact, our monuments and public lands help define who we are as a state. With the designation of our monuments uncertain, we believe our state's historical, cultural and natural heritage hangs in the balance.

Both Gold Butte and Basin and Range monuments are a result of public meetings with input from local communities and were based upon broad local support. Nevadans who enjoy these lands actively participated in the public process leading to their designation. Outdoor recreationists, local organizations, scientists, and tribes with ancestral ties to these lands all worked with prior administrations to ensure these lands were protected at scale necessary to preserve their special and economic values.

In the case of Gold Butte, citizens had expressed concern about the increasing threat of unmanaged visitation to the natural and cultural treasures in Gold Butte. This led the Mesquite City Council to pass two resolutions supporting the preservation of Gold Butte. The Clark County Commission, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe and Moapa Band of Paiutes also approved resolutions of support in 2010. Local community organizations wrote letters to the Nevada delegation urging them to protect Gold Butte. Public meetings were held and many local citizens attended. Legislation to establish a National Conservation Area was introduced in Congress five times between 2008 and 2015. Each time, the proposed bills reflected community negotiations and compromise. Throughout the years, Southern Nevadans demonstrated consistent and overwhelming support for protecting Gold Butte. Polls conducted in 2012, 2016, and 2017, reported that 63 percent, 71 percent and 63 percent of Nevadans, respectively across party lines, supported a National Conservation Area or National Monument designation.

Gold Butte is also a sacred site in the traditional homeland of the Southern Paiutes and is integral to their history. Tribes, like the Moapa Band of Paiutes and the Las Vegas Paiute tribe, have been advocating for

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conservation and monument designation for almost a decade. This sacred land is home to thousands of priceless rock shelters, petroglyphs, and cultural resources that tell the story of the Southern Paiute people. On these lands, there are ancient campsites and trails that go back thousands of years.

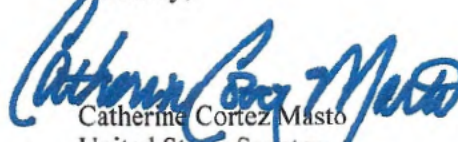
The Basin and Range National Monument was designated on July 10, 2015. This incredible monument preserves the cultural, prehistoric, and historic legacy of the Great Basin area, which includes unique topography, geology, species diversity, archaeological resources, and a recent work of land art. Basin and Range National Monument is full of recreational opportunities, from hiking, camping and mountain biking to horseback riding, hunting, and sightseeing. Tribal people continue to view this landscape as their homeland and have strong connections with its mountains, valleys, and cultural and natural resources. Basin and Range also enjoys a broad coalition of support from business leaders, archeologists, and arts supporters. Permanent protection for the Basin and Range National Monument has not only safeguarded recreational opportunities for Nevadans, but has secured a historical treasure for future generations of scientists and academics.

National Monuments provide rural and Western communities the economic benefits of tourism, outdoor recreation, and quality of life associated with healthy public lands. Monuments can serve as powerful engines for economic growth by providing a competitive advantage to rural communities. Regions surrounding national monuments have seen continued growth or improvement in employment and personal income. Counties with neighboring national monuments have been more successful at sustaining property values, attracting high-wage employers, and securing investment. Additional tourism revenue also increases local, state and federal tax revenue.

In fact, according to an economic report issued this year by Headwater Economics, rural counties in the West with more federal lands had healthier economies, on average, than their peers with less protected lands. In a 2016 report by the Small Business Majority, it was found that natural and cultural national monuments, including Basin and Range, generate a total annual economic impact of about \$156.4 million for local economies. In Nevada alone, the outdoor recreation economy generates 148,000 jobs and \$14.9 billion according to a report by the Outdoor Industry Association. And, at least 57% of Nevada residents participate in outdoor recreation each year. The Pew Charitable Trust in a 2015 study found that a national monument designation for Gold Butte could contribute nearly \$2.7 million per year in economic activity and increase the number of jobs by 60 percent.

Nevada's national monuments are based on consensus, economic facts, and the legitimate need to preserve our cultural and natural resources for our communities and tribes. Most Nevadans want our monuments protected so I urge you to consider our input in determining how you review these important and special areas. We hope that as you consider all of the benefits that Nevada receives from these designations that you leave both monuments intact, as they are an integral part to our way of life. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator