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NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Zinke to tour Ore. site to weigh possible reductions

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Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke will travel to Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon this weekend. Bob Wick/Bureau of Land Management/Flickr

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is set to visit Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument this weekend, as he prepares to recommend potential rescissions to the 100,000-acre site, which straddles southern Oregon and Northern California.

Congressional lawmakers have split over the Cascade-Siskiyou monument along party lines. Oregon's Democratic senators have pressed the Trump administration to refrain from making changes, while House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) has vowed to "undo the damage" of a decision by President Obama to nearly double the size of the monument during his final weeks in office (*E&E News PM*, Jan. 13).

President Clinton first established the site in 2000, marking the first time a monument had been created with the sole intention of protecting biodiversity. Obama added an additional 42,000 acres in Oregon and 5,000 acres in California in late 2016.

During his visit to Oregon, Zinke will meet with Gov. Kate Brown (D), the Klamath Tribes, the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, local Bureau of Land Management officials and council commissioners.

The site is faced with potential reductions as part of Zinke's ongoing review of dozens of national monuments nationwide.

Trump issued an executive order in late April mandating an assessment of all monuments created since 1996 that include more than 100,000 acres for potential elimination, reductions or changes to management plans.

Zinke has already issued one recommendation calling for significant reductions to the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah. Yesterday, he announced he would not call for changes to Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho or Hanford Reach National Monument in Washington state.

The Cascade-Siskiyou monument is among the 24 monuments that Zinke has yet to make any public pronouncements about. He is set to file a final report Aug. 24.

Meeting concerns, lawsuits

In a letter to the Department of Justice yesterday, conservation groups raised concerns that Zinke would meet with representatives of the timber industry who have filed lawsuits over the monument's expansion.

"While we welcome Secretary Zinke's visit to Oregon to view first-hand the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, the Secretary has only arranged to ... talk extensively with Monument opponents," Earthjustice staff attorney Kristen Boyles and Western Environmental Law Center staff attorney Susan Jane Brown wrote in the letter.

"Such a one-sided review is inappropriate and furthers the impression that the Secretary only values the opinions of Monument opponents. To the contrary, the Department of the Interior should represent all Americans, not just timber and county interests," the duo added.

The Justice Department is defending the Cascade-Siskiyou monument in the lawsuit filed by Oregon's Murphy Co. and Murphy Timber Investments LLC, which asserted that more than 80 percent of the new monument land is used for timber production.

Both Earthjustice and WELC are also defending the monument's expansion along with the government.

A federal judge postponed action in that case last month, however, pointing to the Trump administration's ongoing review. The Associated Press reported that the case will proceed with status reports from all parties in late September.

But Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum (D) has threatened a separate lawsuit should the Trump administration attempt to alter the monument's current boundaries.

"As you review the vibrant landscape within the Cascade-Siskiyou region, I know that you and the President will share our desire to preserve it for future generations," Rosenblum wrote in a letter to Zinke, first reported by Oregon Public Broadcasting. "However, if the President attempts instead to revoke or reduce the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, we stand ready to take appropriate legal action."

Conservationists and Democratic lawmakers have repeatedly asserted that Trump has no authority to eliminate monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which allows presidents to protect lands with scientific, cultural or historic value.

Although presidents have previously reduced the size of monuments, no president has done so since the enactment of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and legal scholars assert that such changes are no longer allowable ([*Greenwire*](#), June 6).