

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

A Sportsmen's Perspective

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"Through almost all of human existence, huntable land and huntable wildlife have preceded the hunter. They caused the hunter. But in the future this must be reversed. It is the hunter who must cause huntable land and wildlife and a world worth being young in."

John Madson

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NATIONAL MONUMENTS: A POWERFUL CONSERVATION TOOL

OUR COUNTRY HAS 117 NATIONAL MONUMENTS scattered across 30 states, from the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor to the Misty Fjords in Alaska. National monuments have been established to protect coral reefs in American Samoa, Spanish forts in Florida and extinct volcanoes in New Mexico as well as landscape-scale, sportsmen-supported conservation efforts like the Missouri Breaks in Montana.

The story of the national monuments, and of the Antiquities Act that made them possible, is part of a uniquely American saga, born in the tumult and ferment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when leaders like Theodore Roosevelt, Iowa's Congressman John Fletcher Lacey and others helped birth the most powerful and effective conservation movement the world has ever seen.

Few Americans are aware of how the fairly obscure law called the Antiquities Act has become the instrument for safeguarding dozens of America's most important natural wonders and historical places – including exceptional fish and wildlife habitats that provide some of the best fishing and hunting in the country.

There is no better way to understand what we have – and how best to use it and keep it – than to look at the history of how we got it.

In the decades following the Civil War, explorations of the Desert Southwest revealed the staggering scale of abandoned civilizations in its hidden canyons. Some of the nation's greatest archeological treasures were looted, with mass excavations of ruins and even the use of dynamite speeding the process. Artifacts were sold on the world market and exported to European museums. Ancient timbers and stones were hauled away to build sheds and corncribs.

Illinois-born Edgar Lee Hewitt moved to New Mexico in 1891 at the age of 26 and studied under the brilliant archeologist Adolph Bandelier, who was working on the Pajarito Plateau ruins – and advocating for their protection. It was clear to Hewitt, Bandelier and many others that the pothunting and artifact craze could erase these civilizations before they were even partially understood. Determined to protect what was left, Hewitt guided Republican congressman John Fletcher Lacey of Iowa on an expedition through northern New Mexico to view the ruins and witness the destruction wrought by the pothunting trade.

Congressman Lacey was a staunch conservative, a veteran of four years of combat in the Civil War, early member of the Boone and Crockett Club and one of America's premier sportsman-conservationists. Today he is best known for the Lacey Act of 1900, which prohibits the interstate trade in illegally taken wildlife and fish and ended the devastating era of market hunting and fishing.

Lacey, Hewitt, Roosevelt and other American conservationists of the time viewed the pillage of these archeological sites the same way they viewed the destruction of the wildlife, grassland, timber and water resources of their country – a direct threat to the nation's future and its promise. This was a threat that must be addressed. Lacey said it best: "The immensity of man's power to destroy imposes a responsibility to preserve."

When used properly, the Antiquities Act has given us the opportunity to maintain some of the world's best public hunting and fishing by conserving large and vitally important landscapes that could have been lost or diminished without it.

Congress passed the Antiquities Act with little opposition, and President Theodore Roosevelt signed it into law on June 8, 1906. The law is unique in that it allows the president to proclaim parts of the public domain "protected," bypassing Congress entirely. This authority is checked by public opinion and Congress's power to abolish or modify a national monument, as well as establish monuments on its own.

Over the next 110 years, 16 U.S. presidents – eight Republicans and eight Democrats – would use the Antiquities Act to create national monuments that range from Calvin Coolidge's designation of the 320 square foot Father Millett Cross in Youngstown, New York, to the 140,000 square mile Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument designated by George W. Bush.

Common to many monument designations is the president opting to use his authority when faced with congressional inaction. From the earliest uses of the Antiquities Act to some of the most recent, Congress had the first opportunity to act on initiatives intended to conserve critical public lands. If Congress does not take action, the president can use the Antiquities Act to try and accomplish the same goals. This approach – using the Antiquities Act to break congressional deadlock on conservation – continues to be utilized today.



A young Theodore Roosevelt in hunting attire

> "If we've learned any lessons during the past few decades, perhaps the most important is that preservation of our environment is not a partisan challenge; it's common sense. Our physical health, our social happiness and our economic well-being will be sustained only by all of us working in partnership as thoughtful, effective stewards of our natural resources."
> Ronald Reagan



Ryan Lothrop photo

THE SPORTSMEN'S APPROACH

THE FORESIGHT OF early sportsmen-conservationists has allowed hunters and anglers to protect lands that otherwise would have been left vulnerable to development. Over the past decade, sportsmen and -women have advocated for and successfully convinced decision makers to support the creation of new national monuments in order to conserve high-quality fish and wildlife habitat and valuable hunting and fishing. Examples of new national monuments conceived and advanced by the sporting community include the Rio Grande del Norte in New Mexico and Browns Canyon in Colorado.

While some monuments have fueled social and political controversy, many have not. It's important to remember that only existing federal public lands – not state or private property – can be considered for monument status, and these protected lands are more valuable for their scenery, watersheds, fish and wildlife or historical significance than for industrial development. Monument designation is one of the great American conservation achievements, a concrete statement made by a nation and a people that honors history and natural beauty – now and for generations to come.

In a gridlocked Congress where public land conservation is not prioritized and, even when strong local and bipartisan support exists, often is held captive in unrelated political fights, the Antiquities Act offers a path forward, allowing citizens to ask their president to do what Congress has failed to accomplish. When used properly, the act has given us the opportunity to maintain some of the world's best public hunting and fishing by conserving large and vitally important landscapes that could have been lost or diminished without it.

But in order to be successful, national monuments need to be created in appropriate places, conceived locally from the ground up, enjoy meaningful stakeholder support and provide clear assurances for wildlife management and public access. The long-term vitality of the Antiquities Act depends on it. For national monument proposals to be supported by sportsmen, management of public lands within the monument must remain under a multiple-use agency, and wildlife management authority must be explicitly retained by the state fish and wildlife agency. Wherever this has been the case – such as the elk and mule deer habitat in the Missouri Breaks, which is managed by the BLM – some of the world's best hunting and fishing has been conserved. For that to continue, wherever hunting and fishing take place on public lands proposed for new national monuments, sportsmen must actively engage in proposals before the designation occurs. The Antiquities Act, like any tool in the toolbox of a participatory democratic republic, only works when the citizens participate.

Let's drop the civics and history lesson now and look at some of the great success stories of the Antiquities Act – protected places so rich in scenic beauty and hunting and fishing opportunities that they are the envy of the world. We'll stalk elk in the Missouri Breaks of Montana, hunt blacktails and fish the headwaters of the mighty Eel River in the Berryessa Snow Mountain and catch wild trout in Browns Canyon. It's all part of 150 years of American conservation, the ongoing legacy of tough-minded visionaries like John Lacey, Theodore Roosevelt and others who followed in their footsteps and helped fulfill our destiny as a free people with plenty of room to carry on our traditions of fishing, hunting and simply being outside in wild country.



Ty Churchwell photo

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SPORTSMEN'S TENETS FOR NEW MONUMENTS

America's national monuments not only enable long-term conservation of cultural sites and scientifically valuable resources; they also can conserve some of the best hunting and fishing in America. To accomplish this objective, however, monument designations must be pursued in a way that addresses the priorities and values of sportsmen.

Paramount in achieving this outcome is a process that is locally driven, transparent, incorporates the science-based management and conservation of important fish and wildlife habitat, and upholds continued opportunities to hunt and fish within the boundaries of a proposed monument.

These tenets must be followed in order to generate widespread sportsmen support for a national monument proposed in an area currently open to hunting and fishing:

- The monument proposal must be developed through a public process – one that includes hunters and anglers, as well as appropriate state and local governments.
- The monument proclamation must clearly stipulate that management authority over fish and wildlife populations will be retained by state fish and wildlife agencies.
- Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service lands must remain under the authority of a multiple-use focused land management agency.
- Reasonable public access must be retained to enable continued hunting and fishing opportunities.
- The input and guidance of hunters and anglers must be included in management plans for national monuments.
- Important fish and wildlife habitat must be protected.
- The proposal must enjoy support from local sportsmen and women.
- Sporting opportunities must be upheld and the historical and cultural significance of hunting and fishing explicitly acknowledged in the monument proclamation.



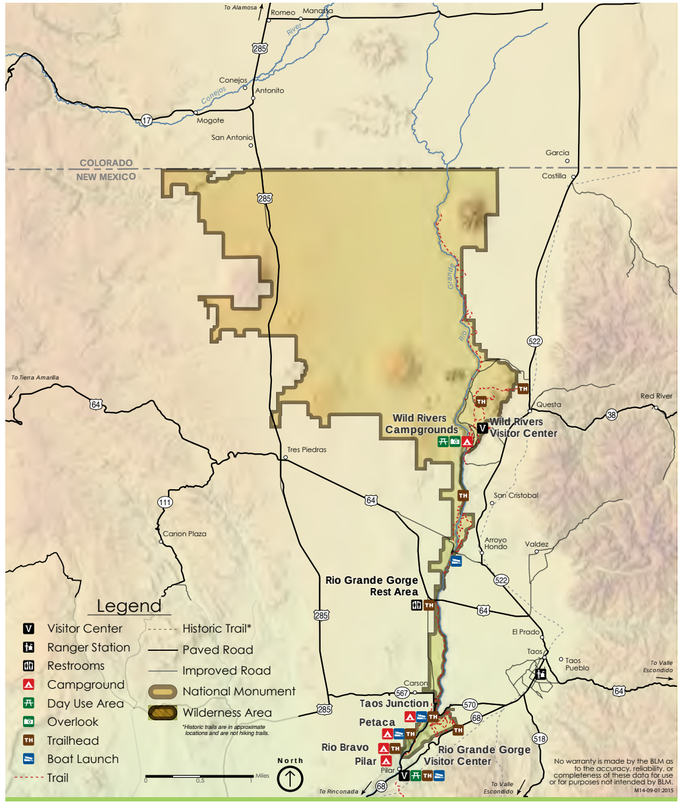
Lisa Peterson photo

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

TO HUNT PRONGHORN in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is to follow in the footsteps of the ancients. The art of hunters not so different from ourselves is etched in the mahogany-colored basalt, strange motifs of lizards, snakes, an eclipsed sun, men in battle with bows, a winged creature that may or may not have existed outside some fevered dream.

The rock art is a chronicle of wanderers here on the Taos plain, from the Clovis people who butchered mammoths with supersized stone axes to the Comanche who claimed this country as part of their empire. A reminder of humans' impermanence, the 10,093 foot Ute Mountain rises above the big sage and blue grama grass of the plain. The huge volcanic pyramid looks as if it could start smoking and belching flame again at any moment. The distant roar of whitewater is the Rio Grande itself, incised over millennia 800 feet deep into stone and ash, one of the most beautiful and striking canyons of the American West and a destination for travelers for at least the past 11,000 years.

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was created on March 25, 2013. The monument, one of the nation's largest, lies in Taos and Rio Arriba counties, New Mexico, and comprises 242,500 acres of wild public lands backcountry hunting and fishing. This is New Mexico Game Unit 50, with strong herds of elk (the plain is situated at about 7,000 feet and is a critical winter range and a calving area), big muleys, pronghorn, black bear and, in the heights and along the ragged cliffs of the gorge, bighorn sheep. The Rio Grande here is one of the West's premier whitewater rivers, ranging from the 6-mile stretch of liquid mortality called the Razorblades to the more moderate 18 miles of near continuous technical water in the Upper Box. The entire river is a world class trout fishery with browns, rainbows and Rio Grande cutthroats, with miles and miles of hike-in waters that produce big, unschooled fish. Northern pike are found in much of the river, and, as you get further downstream, the numbers of trout thin out and smallmouth bass dominate. Visitors here can choose their level of adventure, from a lazy day's fishing at Orilla Verde Recreation Area to extreme backcountry elk and mule deer hunting. There is, of course, backcountry hiking, rock climbing and hot springs soaking to be enjoyed when the hunting and fishing is done.





Josh Duplechian photo

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

NICK STREIT WAS BORN IN TAOS, NEW MEXICO, and owns the Taos Fly Shop and the Reel Life in Santa Fe. He was raised on the Rio Grande, fishing with his father, fly fishing author and legendary guide Taylor Streit.

"The Rio Grande is my home river, my home water, without any doubt, and the country in the monument is where I learned to hunt and fish," said Streit. "It's still my main focus because it is just so interesting. I shot a nice six by six bull in the monument just last year, and I got an antelope in there the year before that. We have Rio Grande turkeys; we have year-round fishing. When the water slows up in the middle of winter we'll focus on pike. March through November, we're into the trout, nymphing primarily, but we have some big caddis hatches in the spring. If you go further downstream, you get into the smallmouth.

"The efforts to protect the river and the BLM lands around it have been going on for years. They were trying to make it a wildlife conservation area, trying to get some kind of protection through Congress, and it just never happened. The reality was that everybody here wanted to see the lands and the river protected, and the Antiquities Act was the only way it was ever going to get done. I see this as an example where the Antiquities Act really worked for the people. Just like my dad taught me to hunt and fish in that country, I can do the same with my kids. That pretty much sums it up."



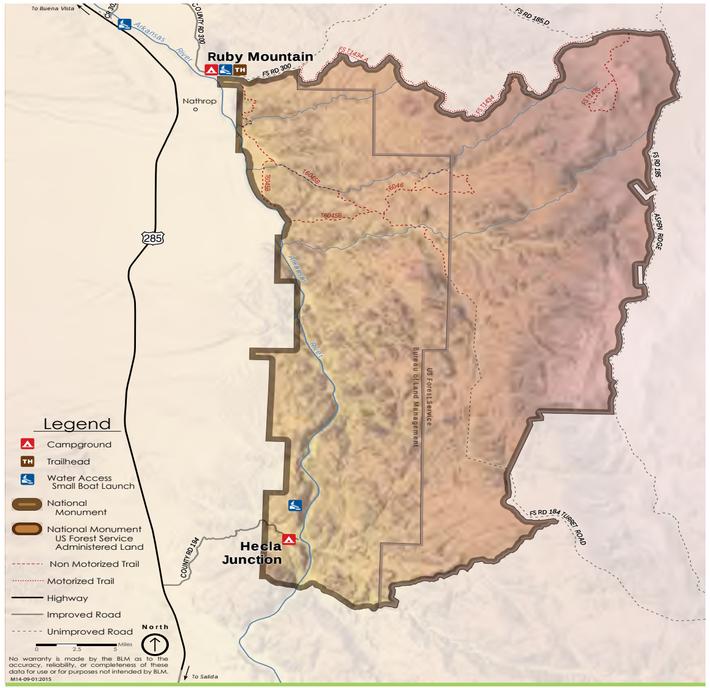
Browns Canyon National Monument

THE ARKANSAS RIVER is a 1,468-mile American icon, a frothing torrent born of snowmelt in the highest Colorado Rockies, a slow moving prairie artery through Kansas and Oklahoma, a broad-backed muddy workhorse of cypress swamps and big catfish where it finally pours into the Mississippi in Arkansas. The Arkansas is history and lifeblood and beauty, all in one mighty stream.

No stretch of the Arkansas is more spectacular, or more loved, than the wild whitewater of Browns Canyon in Chaffee County, Colorado. Upwards of 300,000 Americans come here every year to experience some of the world's most beautiful hellraising rapids in a rugged and wildlife-rich canyon of pink granite, the Sawatch Range towering to the west. This is not just rollercoaster, adrenaline junkie water. It's a Gold Medal trout river, one of the best public trout fisheries in the world, with 20-inch browns mixed in with hard-muscled, coldwater rainbows. The big creeks that roar down from those monster peaks keep the river icy, while the arid, high country climate here means the sun shines an unbelievable average of 310 days per year.

Coloradoans have worked for more than 40 years to permanently conserve and protect this part of the Arkansas and the public lands along and beyond the canyon. This is some of the most important wildlife country in the West because of the diverse terrain, from high alpine meadows and lakes at 10,000 feet down to winter range in the pinon-juniper hills along the river at a moderate 7,300 feet. The full quiver of Colorado big game is here: bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer, black bear and mountain lion, as well as a wealth of non-game species, migratory birds and unique native plants. Recreation on these lands and especially on the river pumps an estimated $55 million into central Colorado's economy every year.

On Feb. 19, 2015, 21,586 acres of this country were designated Browns Canyon National Monument. Widely supported by hunters and anglers, the monument consists of 9,750 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management and 11,836 acres of the San Isabel National Forest. The Arkansas River runs along and through the western edge of the monument, conserved for the American public to access and enjoy in perpetuity.





Josh Duchen photo

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

BILL DVORAK OWNS DVORAK RAFTING AND KAYAKING EXPEDITIONS and holds the first outfitter license ever issued by the state of Colorado. He and his wife Jaci have been guides on the upper Arkansas River since 1985, now joined in the family business by their son and daughter. Dvorak is also the president of the conservation group Friends of Browns Canyon and a leader in the effort to protect public lands and access to the area.

"I remember one time we had 900 people show up at a public meeting," said Dvorak, "and 95 percent of them wanted protection for Browns Canyon. But the politics just dragged on and on. Nobody could get any kind of conservation bill passed, even though this is the most popular whitewater river in Colorado, and there is not one other protected area in the state that has this diversity of wildlife country.

"I have hunted the west side of the Arkansas River, but mostly what I do here is fish. We have big browns, and the rainbows are coming back strong (after being reduced by whirling disease in the 1990s). You've got some of the best Class III whitewater anywhere [and] miles of Gold Medal fishing guaranteed by a voluntary flow program that keeps the river at 700 feet per second. There's nothing like this anywhere, and Browns Canyon is the very heart of it."



Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

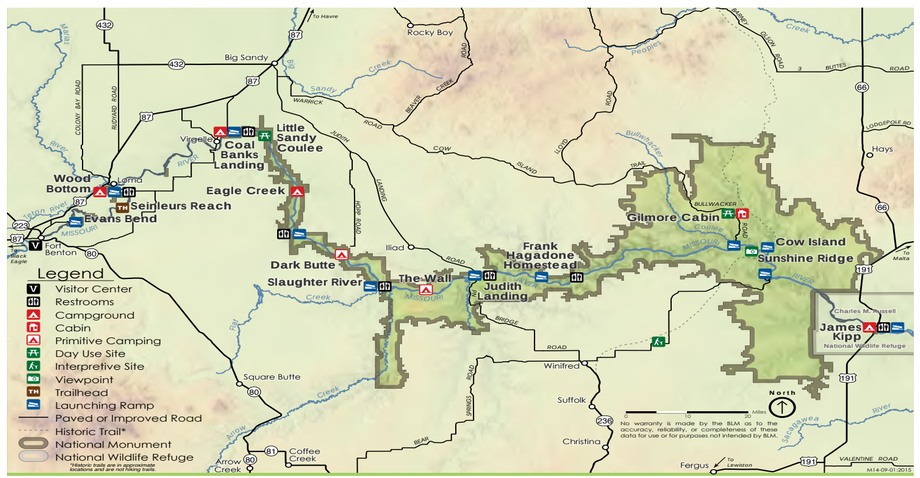
FOR A ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK OR MULE DEER HUNTER, the landscape of the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument literally turns the world upside down.

We are accustomed to going up into the mountains, to seeking the high country. As any Breaks veteran will explain, you go down into the hunting country in the monument, leaving the high sagebrush plains and descending into some of the most complex coulee systems on the planet. Down in there, it's a ponderosa pine and juniper country, a hidden universe of deeply incised canyons, white cliffs and rich meadows falling away to the wide floodplain and cottonwood bottoms of the mighty Missouri River itself. Big, mossbacked mule deer live here in rugged isolation, as well as some of the world's most impressive bighorn rams. For the bird hunter willing to tackle tough country, the sharptail grouse hunting can be superb. And without doubt or argument, it offers some of the best publicly accessible trophy elk hunting in the world.

Few places match the Breaks for sheer adventure. Fall means hunting and is the only time you'll see more than a few fellow humans here. Fall is Indian summer heat and fierce snow squalls, a cacophony of bugling elk with sharptails flushing at the head of the coulees. Springtime means hunting the increasing population of wild turkeys, and high water on the Missouri River brings prime fishing for big channel cats, shovelnose sturgeon and even paddlefish in the swirling eddies. The 149 miles of designated Wild and Scenic River are a floater's dream in summer, a slow-motion voyage into the heart of the monument, camping on the trails and crossings used by Lewis and Clark and Native American hunting parties and exploring ghostly abandoned homesteads, outlaw hideouts and bizarre rock formations on the skyline. In the days of the Wild West, you kept your wits about you in the Breaks. That has not changed.

You can wander at will here in winter, too, if you are tough and self-sufficient. Be prepared for howling blizzards and days of iron, subzero temperatures, the river locked tight, the country empty of mankind.

If a little rain falls here, you'll soon understand why the locals call the roads and soils "gumbo" and avoid them when they're wet. The country becomes impassable and doesn't care about your schedule for getting in or out. The Upper Missouri Break National Monument has an easy side, with plenty of road access and beautiful walking, wildlife viewing or picnicking. But it offers its very best to the adventurer – the outdoorsperson who is comfortable in the back of beyond.




Bob Wick/BLM photo



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

MATT WILLIAMS GREW UP IN HAVRE, MONTANA, north of the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument, with what he calls "straight line access" south into the Breaks. Williams is a helicopter pilot in the Navy Reserves and flies the REACH Air Ambulance Service helicopter out of Bozeman, Montana.

"I shot my first deer in the Bullwhacker Coulee, and all that land in the monument holds a special place in my heart," said Williams. "I grew up fishing and floating the river, fishing for catfish. And now, any chance I get, that is where I go."

Williams killed his antelope buck last fall in the monument. He has taken a cow elk there but never a big bull.

"Not yet," he said. "The remoteness of that place, the quality of the game and just the wildness of it all. … It's hard to explain. You always have the feeling that this is just not an easy place – it's not easy to hunt, the weather is extreme. I've been into parts of the monument where you get the feeling that you might be the first person to ever set foot there. It's really like stepping back in time."

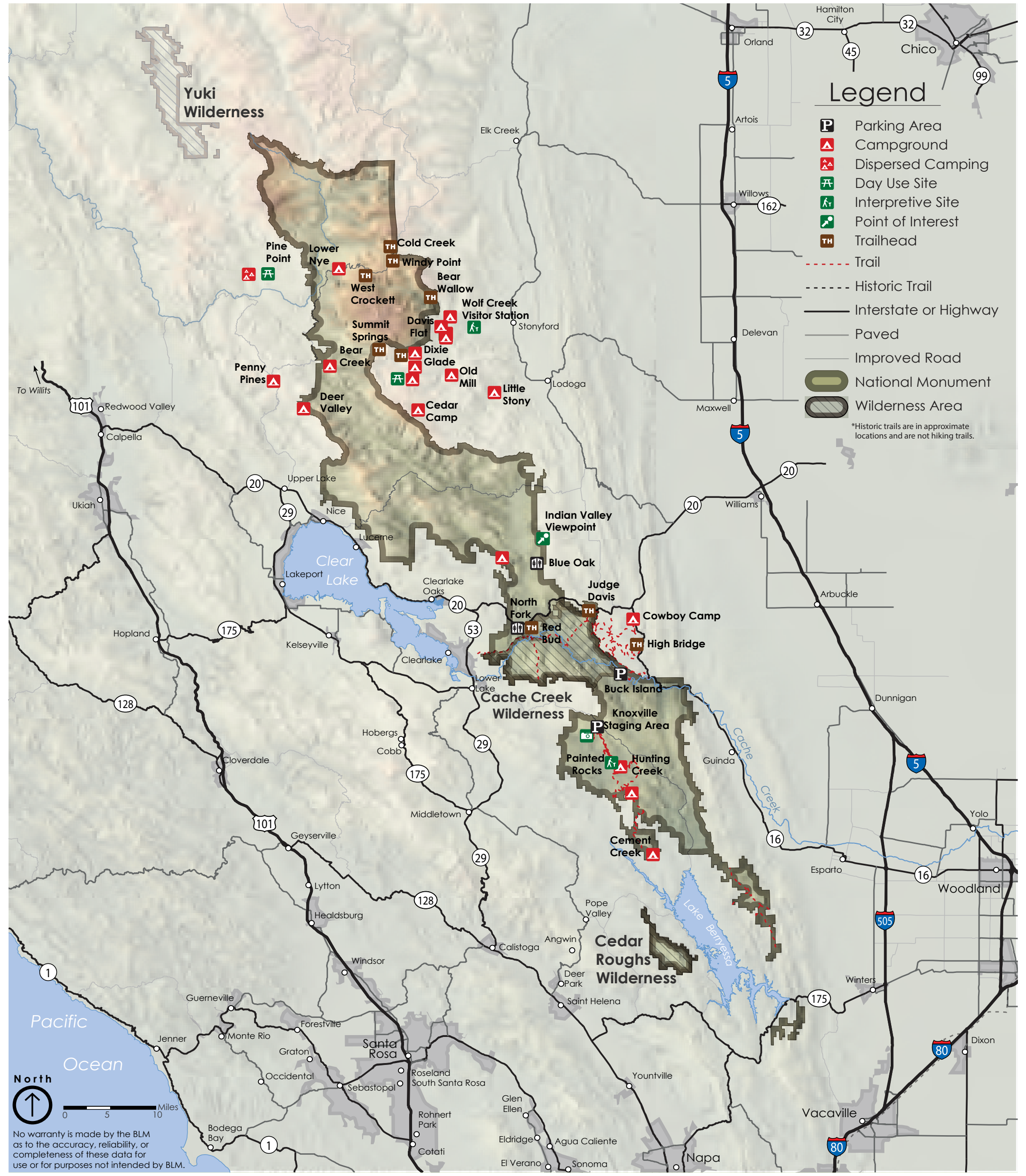
Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument

IT'S HOT WEATHER, EARLY SEASON BOWHUNTING for Columbia blacktails in classic California backcountry, the kind of big country that most Americans don't think still exists in our most populated state. It's going light and fast for fall turkey, with a couple of backup loads of slugs for feral hogs and a pack rod for smallmouth, browns and catfish in Cache Creek. You can look west from the traffic on I-5 or 505 into the heart of the northern Coast Range and know that heart is beating as it has for millennia, with tule elk bugling in pathless forests and clear-running creeks tumbling down to charge rivers that provide local water supplies and habitat for salmon and steelhead.

Nine million people live within easy driving distance of the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, and you can spend days here without seeing any of them – days ruled not by clocks and commutes and paperwork but by nature's own time, marked only by wind in sage and oak, the gobbling of a tom turkey before daylight, the lonesome cry of an owl at day's end.

The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument is big – 100 miles long and 330,780 acres – with three wilderness areas, miles of 4x4 and ATV trails, rugged canyons, impenetrable manzanita thickets and wide open, high country Jeffrey pine forests. The land goes from near sea level to 7,056 feet at the summit of Snow Mountain and includes parts of seven northern California counties. Before attaining monument status, the public lands here, some of the most diverse in the nation, were managed by what one reporter called "a jurisdictional mishmash" of agencies – Mendocino National Forest, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management. Californians recognized the irreplaceable nature of such a huge block of public lands – not just for recreation but for watershed protection, which was and is critical to the continuation of agriculture in the private lands below. The extreme drought brought the issue home, but conservation and outdoor groups, local businesses and political leaders at local, state and federal levels all tried for more than 10 years to attain some protected status, and a unified management plan, for these lands. A proposed national conservation area designation in 2012 languished in Congress despite broad support from sportsmen's groups. The California state legislature passed a resolution urging President Obama to create the monument in April 2015. Such a resolution never had passed in the state's history.

Black-tailed deer are the primary draw for hunters here, as they have been since men were working in the region's chert quarries, some of which date back over 10,000 years. Feral hogs, welcome or not, are on the increase, and black bear and Merriam's turkey numbers are strong. There is a thriving and growing herd of tule elk. Mourning dove, pigeon and California quail hunting provide opportunities for the bird hunter. On the southern end of the monument are the headwaters of Putah Creek, where anglers have a chance at 30-inch rainbows on California's newest designated Wild Trout Water, which is poised to become one of the state's premier trout streams.





VOICES FROM THE FIELD

MARK SZYDLO IS A WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST and worked for the BLM in what now is the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument from 2011-2013.

"Most California fishermen know Lake Berryessa, just south of the monument, because you can catch Chinook salmon and kokanee in the same lake where somebody also caught a 20 pound largemouth," said Szydlo. "The monument runs north of there for about a hundred miles, and it provides the kind of connectivity of habitat that has been lost just about everywhere else in a densely populated state like California. You start in these riparian areas and marshes, go to the oak savannas, through the chaparral, and up into the big Jeffrey pines and sub-alpine country – a huge watershed, as diverse as you'll find anywhere. This is only 100 miles from San Francisco or Napa, and it's the great escape for a whole lot of urban people – first day of bow season, first day of muzzleloader, first day of rifle, it can look pretty crowded, but it is such a big piece of country that it seems to work out well. Like anywhere, if you are willing to walk, you can get a good piece of it for yourself.

"I think what is most important about the monument is that it is so accessible, for so many people, in a state where we have fewer places to hunt and camp and see what is out there – what a lot of Westerners might take for granted, what defines the West, big expanses of public land, we still have it here. For so many workaday hunters in this part of California, this is the sweet spot, the place to go."


Stefan McLeod photo

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

IN 1682, ANTONIO DE OTERMIN, the Spanish governor of New Mexico, was in what is now El Paso, Texas, resting up from a bloody, fiery and unsuccessful campaign to retake New Mexico from the Pueblo people after the Pope's Rebellion.

That same year, it is believed, Spanish explorers or soldiers in southern New Mexico named the Organ Mountains, an ancient landmark of spires and towers that they thought resembled the pipes of an organ. The Organ Mountains are just under 9,000 feet tall, their summits lost in the sky, with completely different climates and plants and wildlife from the deserts below. Don Juan de Onate wrote about them in his journal in 1598, as he traveled El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the Royal Road to the Interior, from Mexico City, which was merely a new name for a much, much older trail.

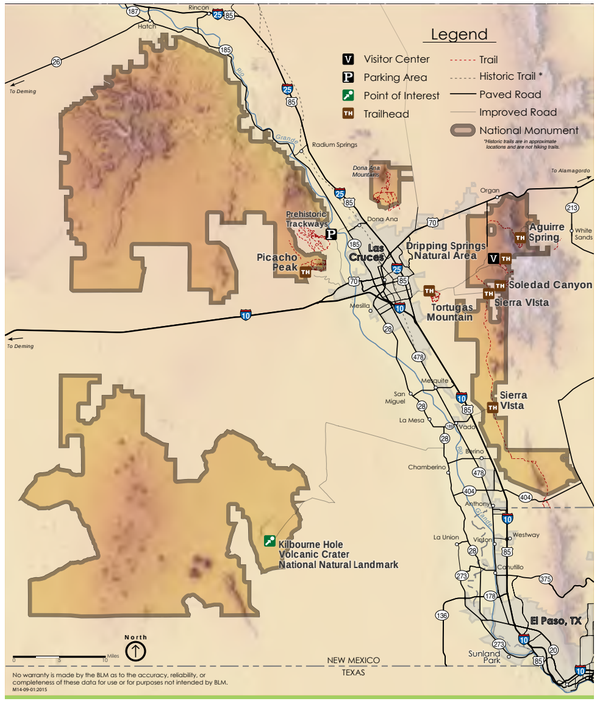
There is hunting aplenty here, for desert muleys, mountain lion, javelina, quail and even waterfowl in the wet years. But the hunting here is done in a land of ghosts, buried wonders and the echoes of lost civilizations.

Five mountain ranges are in the 496,330-acre Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument: the Robledo, Sierra de las Uvas, Doña Ana, Organ and Potrillo mountains. Below and around them, the Chihuahua desert yawns, sere grasslands intersperse with the stark spikes of sotol against the white sky, ocotillo bloom in otherworldly colors. The mountains and their deep and shadowed canyons hold forests of oak and juniper and Mexican buckeye, nourished by the rains and snows that catch here in the heights. The springs and seeps that issue from the rocks create habitat for more than 30 species of ferns, just one part of the incredible diversity of life that makes the Organ Mountains famous.

In the Robledo Mountains, you can hike to Outlaw Rock, where William "Billy the Kid" Bonney, Dave Rudabaugh, Tom O'Folliard, and Charlie Bowdrie left their initials at their cave hideout at Black Hill. For another cave exploration, seek Geronimo's Cave, where the Apache war shaman and his fighters, on the run from cavalry and scouts, entered one hot afternoon. The cavalry, so goes the legend, guarded the entrance, assured that finally, after all the killings and the endless pursuit, Geronimo was theirs. The Apaches never emerged, though they soon resumed their raids elsewhere, as if capable of passing through stone.

Rock art here ranges from bighorn sheep to horned men and plumed serpents. There is an occasional human figure with what looks like a Spanish cutlass, though most of the art is older. Archeologists say that some of the rock art here is unique to these strange mountain ranges, these sky islands in the desert. Hunters in the volcanic West Potrillo Mountains should take special note of the country. This is some of the best remaining examples of Chihuahua desert, replete with the original native plants and wildlife. Unsurprisingly, designation of the monument drew the support of more than a dozen local sportsmen's groups.

If you want to ponder the true passage of time, keep an eye out for Clovis points dropped by hunters who followed mastodons instead of mule deer. There is a lava tube here in the Aden Crater where explorers found a giant sloth, dead 11,000 years, with hair and hide almost intact. Now that, by any measure, is an antiquity.





Bob Wick/BLM photo

VOICES FROM THE FIELD



JOHN CORNELL IS THE SPORTSMAN COORDINATOR for the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

"I've got friends from Las Cruces who have been hunting these lands for 50 years and more," said Cornell. "We hunt the monument for mule deer, and on the years we get rain, there's great hunting for Gambel's and Montezuma quail, and when there's water in the playas we are in the ducks and doves.

"Some people were worried about having the Antiquities Act used to protect these lands because the act doesn't mention hunting or grazing. But the proclamation states specifically that recreation and other traditional uses will continue. That's what sportsmen here and so many other people supported and worked for. With the kind of Congress and the kind of polarization we have now, there's not a chance that this protection would have ever come through legislation. Monument status fits this place perfectly. We have BLM management, a multiple-use agency; we have wilderness study areas inside it; we have lands that are not wilderness, with plenty of existing access that will be maintained. We've successfully protected the best of our public lands and done it without restricting any of the uses we need to keep.

"This monument is so close to the second largest city in New Mexico [Las Cruces]. People of all walks of life will have the chance to see and know some of the best of New Mexico. I'm especially proud of the role sportsmen played in this. We were the key players, the more conservative side of the effort, and that helped to bridge the gaps between the various conservation groups and people who might otherwise oppose the monument. Everybody from here to D.C. listened to the sportsmen on this one, and we got it right."

This report is supported by the following sporting groups and businesses























































