



United States Congress
Washington, DC 20510

February 19, 2010

Dear Member of Congress,

We ask your immediate review and formal response to the threatened creation of 13 million acres of new National Monuments in 11 states without any public input or Congressional oversight. We present this request on behalf of the BlueRibbon Coalition and its members across the country.

BlueRibbon is a national recreational advocacy group with over 10,000 individual, business and organizational members representing approximately 600,000 individuals nationwide. BlueRibbon members use motorized and non-motorized means, including off-highway vehicles (OHV), snowmobiles, horses, mountain bikes and hiking, to access and recreate upon state and federally-managed lands throughout the United States, including federally-managed lands throughout the United States.

A document recently leaked through the DOI indicates the Administration is considering a flurry of new national monument designations in the near future. The document mentions designations and land acquisitions in 11 different western states: Utah, Montana, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Alaska, and Wyoming. As many as 13 million acres of land (possibly more) are at risk for potential designation under the proposed plan.

The 1906 Antiquities Act authorizes the President to create national monuments on federal lands that contain historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, or other objects of historic or scientific interest. Since 1906, Presidential proclamations have created about 120 monuments totaling roughly 70 million acres. Congress has modified many of these, has created monuments itself, and about a dozen times has abolished presidentially-created monuments.

The Act instructs the President to reserve "the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected." During initial debate on the Act, the argument was whether to allow the maximum designation to be 320 or 640 acres.

Unfortunately, application of the Antiquities Act has evolved beyond these limited purposes. It is now being used to preserve large areas of public lands in the absence any public comment, input from state and local elected officials, or congressional review.

For example, President Clinton relied on the Act 22 times to designate nearly 5.9 million acres of federal land as national monuments. Many of these designations far exceeded the "smallest area compatible" to preserve the resource and nearly all were designated without any public input or

consultation with state and local officials. These designations occurred without any formal public input or public disclosure consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act. Courts have generally declined to prohibit such aggressive interpretation of the Act, but have noted that Congress retains the ultimate power to check what it believes are Presidential excesses.

In many areas, environmental groups, sportsmen, and OHV enthusiasts are joining county commissioners to work on collaborative solutions. Unilateral Presidential designation precludes such locally-generated compromise solutions and will have a chilling effect on these and future efforts. At a minimum, those living in the vicinity and otherwise connected to these lands should have meaningful input to the President, whose vision might otherwise be obscured by agency lifers or special interest lobbyists too-long confined to the DC beltway.

We urge you to (1) immediately go on record as opposing any unilateral monument designations and (2) sponsor or co-sponsor legislation that would provide for Congressional review of and/or public and governmental input upon at least some Antiquities Act proclamations before any designation takes place.

Thank you for considering these important concerns.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Mumm", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Greg Mumm
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition