

President Obama designates five new National Monuments

Written by

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WASHINGTON, DC – President Obama today signed proclamations establishing five new national monuments, using his authority under the Antiquities Act, which celebrate our nation's rich history and natural heritage. The monuments, located in Delaware, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio and Washington, help tell the story of significant people and extraordinary events in American history, as well as protect unique natural resources for the benefit of all Americans. The designations were made with bi-partisan support from congressional, state and local officials, local businesses and other stakeholders and are expected to promote economic growth in the local communities through tourism and outdoor recreation.

"These sites honor the pioneering heroes, spectacular landscapes and rich history that have shaped our extraordinary country," said President Obama. "By designating these national monuments today, we will ensure they will continue to inspire and be enjoyed by generations of Americans to come."

"From the treasured landscapes of northern New Mexico and Washington, to the historic sites in Delaware, to the sites that show our nation's path from Civil War to civil rights, these monuments help tell the rich and complex story of our nation's history and natural beauty," Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. "There's no doubt that these monuments will serve as economic engines for the local communities through tourism and outdoor recreation – supporting economic growth and creating jobs."

According to the National Parks and Conservation Association study in 2006 each federal dollar invested in national parks generates at least four dollars of economic value to the public. National parks are responsible for \$13.3 billion dollars of local, private-sector economic activity nationwide, supporting 267,000 private-sector jobs. Outdoor recreation alone generates \$646 billion in consumer spending and 6.1 million direct jobs in the United States each year, according to the Outdoor Industry Association.

The monuments are:

Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Ohio. The monument will preserve the home of Col. Charles Young (1864–1922), a distinguished officer in the United States Army who was the third African American to graduate from West Point and the first to achieve the

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rank of Colonel. Young also served as one of the early Army superintendents of Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, before the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916. The national headquarters of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, of which Col. Young was a member, made the property available for acquisition by the federal government for the purpose of establishing the national monument commemorating Young's life and accomplishments. The monument, located in Wilberforce, Ohio, will be managed by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

First State National Monument in Delaware. The monument will tell the story of the early Dutch, Swedish, Finnish and English settlement of the colony of Delaware, as well as Delaware's role as the first state to ratify the Constitution. The park is comprised of three historic areas related to Delaware's rich history: the Dover Green, the New Castle Court House complex (including the courthouse, Green and Sheriff's House), and the Woodlawn property in the Brandywine Valley. The monument will be managed by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland. The monument commemorates the life of the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad who was responsible for helping enslaved people escape from bondage to freedom. The new national park, located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, includes large sections of landscapes that are significant to Tubman's early life in Dorchester County and evocative of her life as a slave and conductor of the Underground Railroad. The park includes Stewart's Canal, dug by hand by free and enslaved people between 1810 and the 1830s and where Tubman learned important outdoor skills when she worked in the nearby timbering operations with her father. Lands that are part of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, although part of the new national monument, will continue to be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument also includes the home site of Jacob Jackson, a free black man who used coded letters to help Tubman communicate with family and others. The monument will also partner with the State of Maryland's Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park Visitor Center when it opens in 2015. The monument will be managed by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

Río Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico. Located northwest of Taos, the Río Grande del Norte contains stretches of the Río Grande Gorge and extinct volcanoes that rise from the Taos Plateau. The area is known for its spectacular landscapes and recreational opportunities – like rafting, fishing and hiking – and serves as important habitat for many birds and wildlife. The monument is also home to a dense collection of petroglyphs and extraordinary archaeological and cultural resources dating from the Archaic Period to the more recent passage of Hispanic settlers. The monument will be managed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, which currently manages the more than 240,000 acres of the monument.

San Juan Islands National Monument in Washington. Home to bald eagles, orca whales, harbor seals and other rare species, the San Juan Islands is a chain of 450 islands, rocks and pinnacles. Located in Washington State's Puget Sound, the archipelago provides an opportunity for visitors, campers, kayakers and birdwatchers to experience the natural beauty of the

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undeveloped, rugged landscape. A number of historic lighthouses are located on the islands, as well as cultural resources and fossils dating back 12,000 years. The monument will be managed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

President Obama has previously designated four monuments using the Antiquities Act. These include the César E. Chávez National Monument in California, Chávez' home and the headquarters of the United Farm Workers of America since the early 1970s when Chávez was its president; Fort Monroe National Monument in Virginia, a former Army post integral to the history of slavery, the Civil War, and the U.S. military; Fort Ord National Monument in California, a former military base that is a world-class destination for outdoor recreation; and Chimney Rock, which is located in the San Juan National Forest in southwestern Colorado and offers a spectacular landscape rich in history and Native American culture.

First exercised by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 to designate Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming, the authority of the Antiquities Act has been used by 16 presidents since 1906 to protect unique natural and historic features in America, such as the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, and Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients.

The designation of the monuments builds on President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative, which fosters a 21st century approach to conservation that responds to the priorities of the American people.