May 18, 2017  (updated with additional signatories on June 5, 2017)

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry  
Member, California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room Room 5144  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Bill Dodd  
Member, California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5064  
Sacramento, CA 95814
RE: Support for Assembly Joint Resolution 15 – Protecting California’s national monuments and the integrity of the Antiquities Act

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry and Senator Dodd:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to thank you for your leadership and for championing an effort to re-state California’s ongoing commitment to our national monuments. We urge the legislature to pass Assembly Joint Resolution 15 (AJR 15) in time for the June 8th anniversary of the Antiquities Act.

On May 5, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) announced a review of certain national monuments designated or expanded since 1996 under the Antiquities Act of 1906 in order to implement President Trump’s Executive Order 13792 dated April 26, 2017. The Secretary of the Interior will use the review to “determine whether each designation or expansion conforms to the policy stated in the Executive Order and to formulate recommendations for Presidential actions, legislative proposals, or other appropriate actions to carry out that policy.” The DOI notice identified twenty-seven National Monuments under review – including seven in California – and has invited comments to inform their review.

The Antiquities Act authorizes the President of the United States to designate as national monuments any historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are located on land owned or controlled by the Federal Government. Since it was signed into being by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, the Antiquities Act has been used on a bipartisan basis by the majority of U.S. presidents (eight Republicans and eight Democrats). There are now over 150 monuments – including 22 in California -- that shield and preserve America’s cultural, historical, and natural heritage for future generations.

No president has ever attempted to revoke a predecessor’s monument designation, even where some public disagreement over the designation existed. And legal scholars agree that no president has the legal authority to eliminate or significantly alter a national park or national monument.

As local champions for the designation of Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, you know firsthand that national monuments are part of our American heritage that safeguard many of our most awesome landscapes and waterways. They also preserve and respect Native American cultural sites, and drive tourism and outdoor recreation which support jobs.

Outdoor recreation alone drives a $887-billion economy and supports 7.6 million jobs. Numerous studies have proved that communities located near monuments and other protected public lands have stronger economies, and that the outdoor and recreational opportunities they provide increase residents’ quality of life, making areas near monuments more attractive to new residents, entrepreneurs and small businesses, and investment.

The designation of these unique California places occurred because of broad-based support from conservation organizations, hikers, mountain bikers, horse riders, legal off-highway-vehicle users, hunters, anglers, rock climbers, whitewater paddlers, tribes, veterans, faith leaders and others, which worked closely with local elected officials and businesses.
As your AJR 15 concludes, “The values of the state of California include ‘historic diversity, scientific advancement, economic output, and sense of global responsibility,’ and these values are advanced by the permanent protection of public lands.”

We thank you for asking your colleagues to join you in conveying to the federal government the sense of the California legislature that America’s protected federal public lands are a national treasure that belong to all Americans and which should be maintained for future generations.

Please call on us to help you in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

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