**Facts About National Monuments**

 **Medicine Lake Highlands**

While the public lands and natural areas we like to explore and enjoy may seem protected, most of these places are not necessarily safeguarded into the future. National monuments are designated to protect public lands and waters that have cultural, historic, ecological, and scientific importance to ensure that future generations can enjoy these places.

Some of California’s most iconic natural areas are protected as national monuments, including the California Coast and the San Gabriel Mountains. Death Valley, Joshua Tree, Channel Islands, Lassen Volcanic, and Pinnacles National Parks were first designated as national monuments too.

National monuments honor communities’ cultural, spiritual, historical, and ecological values and are subject to specific management plans that are developed through a public process with local input and Tribal consultation. Designating national monuments prevents harmful development projects and may help increase agency staff and funding resources to improve management of recreation and other activities on these lands.

For Medicine Lake Highlands, designating a national monument would put an end to the continued industrial energy development and geothermal project proposals the Tribes and our local community have been fighting for decades. The risks associated with these energy projects not only threaten the cultural and historic Tribal resources and uses of the land, but they also put the water, the wildlife, and our way of life at risk.

**What does this mean for local cabin owners and private lands?**National Monument designations are about the management of federally-owned public lands, such as Forest Service lands, and do not impact or influence what you can do on your private property. National monuments protect “existing rights,” including the right to access your property. (Developing your property is governed by county or local municipal zoning laws, and are not affected by a national monument designation.)

Generally speaking, a national monument designation leads to an increase in property values for private property adjacent to or within a national monument boundary, because it guarantees that the adjacent public lands will be managed for protection, rather than development.

**National monument designation is a non-partisan tool utilized by Republican and Democrat presidents since 1906.**The Antiquities Act grants U.S. presidents the ability to designate federal public lands, waters, and cultural and historical sites as national monuments with a Presidential Proclamation. Since President Teddy Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law in 1906, 19 US Presidents from both parties have used the Act to protect national monuments. Congress can also establish or modify national monuments through legislation.

The Antiquities Act has a long history of use in California, resulting in lasting and sometimes expanded protection of natural and cultural landscapes, historic sites, and coastal areas.

Since 1907 when Cinder Cone and Lassen Peak (now combined as Lassen Volcanic National Park) were designated, both Republicans and Democrats have used this law to proclaim more than 20 national monuments in California. Including:

* Muir Woods, which has been protected as a national monument since 1908
* Joshua Tree, which was designated as a national monument in 1936 before legislatively designated as a national park in 1994.

Over time, Presidents have additionally enlarged the boundaries of previously designated national monuments in California, including California Coastal which has expanded multiple times in the past 20 years.

**A Medicine Lake Highlands national monument would still be managed by the US Forest Service - the same agency that we collaborate with now.**
National monuments can be managed by one or more of these federal agencies: National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Defense or Department of Energy.

The lands being proposed for protection in the Medicine Lake Highlands are already federally managed by the US Forest Service (there are no new private lands being proposed for inclusion) and that would continue under a monument proclamation. The monument would **not** be managed by the Park Service, a state agency, or any other federal agency.

The Forest Service would adhere to the proclamation that indicates how these lands are managed and protected and what kinds of activities and uses are permitted or prohibited. This protective designation directs the agency or agencies to develop a resource management plan with local input and Tribal consultation, which protects the unique characteristics of the lands and may be aimed at providing culturally-appropriate education programs, promoting cooperative conservation, preserving critical wildlife habitat, and other priorities.

For example, Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument is jointly managed by the USFS and BLM and was established in 2015. Visitors can hike, camp, backpack, hunt, fish, mountain bike, ride horses, use off-highway vehicles on designated trails and routes, kayak, and hang glide.

**Local communities have input into how national monuments are managed.**
National monuments ensure public lands are managed with local input to facilitate careful, responsible enjoyment of these special areas. Local input is collected through an extensive public National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process, which includes public meetings, field trips, and other consultations.

**Recreational activities are permitted in national monuments.**

National monuments protect public lands and waters for future generations and help enhance access to nature so that current and future generations can enjoy outdoor recreation. Depending on the activities available in the area and the monument’s management plan, permitted activities may include hiking, camping, picnicking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, climbing, and riding motorized vehicles on appropriate and designated routes. Most national monuments also allow dogs.

The management of these areas takes into consideration local priorities that may include assessing opportunities to improve quiet recreational access, preserving Tribal culture and religious activities, and promoting cooperative conservation and management opportunities to enhance and restore wildlife habitat and corridors. Historically, monuments can also help bring in additional resources for recreation management and improve visitor experience.

**National monuments allow agencies access to fight wildfires and other natural disasters.**Fire agencies like CAL FIRE, the US Forest Service, and local entities retain their full existing authority and ability to fight wildfires in national monuments. Further, designating new national monuments can help reduce the risk of wildfire by increasing agency staff and funding to patrol for new wildfire ignitions, increasing enforcement of fire rules, reducing new high-risk development, and restoring forests. For example, Berryessa Snow Mountain and Mojave Trails National Monuments each have a designated BLM staff member to help manage these lands.

**Forest Service and BLM managed monuments are typically free to visit, unlike most National Park Service units**
Most of California’s national monuments are free to visit. Some national monuments do charge an entrance fee or fees to use certain recreation areas, particularly those managed by the National Park Service. Most Forest Service cultural sites allow for quiet recreation and visitation without a fee.