

National Monuments and the National Park System

February 2017

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According to the 2005- 2007 Official Index of the National Park Service there were 73 areas of the national park system officially titled “national monuments.”

In 2008, Congress converted a national monument in Idaho (“Minidoka Internment”) to a national historic site, making 72 national monuments. Since 2008, President George W. Bush declared national monument #73 in New York (“African Burial Ground”), and President Obama declared national monument #74 in Virginia (“Fort Monroe”) and #75 in California (“Cesar Chavez”).

In January 2013, Congress converted Pinnacles National Monument into a national park. Thus, as of January 3, 2013, there were 74 national monuments. In March 2013, President Obama declared three new national monuments to be administered by the NPS. They are “The First State National Monument” in Delaware, the “Charles Young-Buffalo Soldier National Monument” in Ohio and the “Harriet Tubman-Underground Railroad National Monument” in Maryland. This action brought the number of national monuments to 77.

In December 2014, Congress directly established a new national monument in Nevada – Tule Springs, and renamed the First State National Monument as a “national historical park,” thus leaving the number of national monuments unchanged at 77. Also in December 2014, Congress incorporated (though technically did not abolish) the Harriet Tubman National Monument into a new “national historical park.” For purposes of this compilation, it is considered abolished. National Monuments thus stood at 76.

In February 2015, President Obama declared two new national monuments – Pullman National Monument in Chicago, Illinois and Honouliuli National Monument on Oahu in Hawaii. There were 78 national monuments in the national park system.

In July 2015, President Obama declared the Waco Mammoth National Monument in Texas, the 79th national monument.

In February 2016, President Obama proclaimed the Castle Mountains National Monument in San Bernardino County, California, the 80th NPS administered national monument.

In April 2016, President Obama proclaimed Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in Washington, D.C., the 81st NPS-administered national monument.

In June 2016, President Obama proclaimed Stonewall National Monument in New York City, New York, the 82nd NPS-administered national monument.

In August 2016, President Obama proclaimed the Katahdin Woods National Monument in Maine, the 83rd NPS national monument.

In January 2017, President Obama proclaimed Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument in Alabama, Freedom Riders National Monument also in Alabama, and Reconstruction Era National Monument in South Carolina.

There are now 86 national monuments in the national park system. Of the 86 extant national monuments, there are 27 national monuments created by acts of Congress, rather than by a presidential proclamation. They are displayed by state:

- Canyon de Chelly NM (AZ)
- Hohokam Pima NM (AZ)
- Florissant Fossil Beds NM (CO)
- Fort Frederica NM (GA)
- Ocmulgee NM (GA)
- Hagerman Fossil Beds NM (ID)
- Poverty Point NM (LA)
- Fort McHenry NM (MD)
- Grand Portage NM (MN)
- Pipestone NM (MN)
- George Washington Carver NM (MI)
- Little Bighorn Battlefield NM (MT)
- Agate Fossil Beds NM (NE)
- Homestead NM of America (NE)
- El Malpais NM (NM)
- Fort Union NM (NM)
- Petroglyph NM (NM)
- Salinas Pueblo Mission ((NM)
- Tule Springs (NV)
- Castle Clinton NM (NY)
- Fort Stanwix NM (NY)
- John Day Fossil Beds NM (OR)
- Fort Sumter NM (SC)
- Alibates Flint Quarries NM (TX)
- Booker T. Washington NM (VA)

- George Washington Birthplace NM (VA)
- Fossil Butte NM (WY)

(Note that Canyon de Chelly is an anomaly. It was authorized by an Act of Congress in 1931 and proclaimed by the President under that act. Thus it results from both an act of Congress and a presidential proclamation (though not an Antiquities Act proclamation)).

If there is a pattern here, it is that Congress designated national monuments for small historic areas and paleontological sites. El Malpais National Monument is a large and varied area and appears to be an exception to the pattern. Thus, there is no “rule.”

Two thirds (56) of the 83 extant NPS national monuments exist today solely as a result of a presidential proclamation. They add immeasurably to the national park system

Congress has the power to abolish national monuments.

Congress abolished several national monuments created by presidential proclamations. Three of the 15 National Monuments transferred from the Forest Service to the National Park Service in 1933 (Executive Order 6166, June 10, 1933) - Holy Cross (CO), Old Kasaan (AK) and Wheeler (CO) – were later abolished. The monuments were abolished by Congress in 1950, 1955 and 1950 respectively, and the lands encompassed in them reverted to Forest Service administration.

The War Department administered ten National Monuments established by proclamation: Big Hole Battlefield, Cabrillo, Castle Pinckney, Father Millet Cross, Fort Marion, Fort Matanzas, Fort Pulaski, Meriwether Lewis, Mound City Group and the Statue of Liberty National Monuments. The monuments were transferred to the Department of the Interior by Executive Order (EO) No. 6166, referenced above. Because of some doubt as to the meaning of EO No. 6166, President Roosevelt issued EO 6228 on July 28, 1933, specifically listing War Department properties, including national monuments that were to be transferred to the National Park Service. Of these ten, Father Millet Cross National Monument was abolished by Congress in 1949. Castle Pinckney National Monument was deauthorized in 1956. Meriwether Lewis National Monument became part of Natchez Trace National Parkway in 1961. Congress renamed Fort Marion "Castillo de San Marcos National Monument" in 1942.

Presidential Proclamations created five other monuments that no longer exist and whose lands are not now administered by the NPS. The monuments were given over to the NPS at their origin and were administered by the NPS until their demise. The monuments and the year of abolition by Congress were: Fossil Cycad (SD) (1956), Lewis and Clark Cavern (MT) (1937), Papago

Saguaro (AZ) (1930), Shoshone Cavern (MT) (1954) and Verendrye (ND) (1956).

Many national monuments were abolished and their lands incorporated into a new NPS area, created by Congressional act.

Over time, Congress abolished 52 national monuments by incorporating their land into National Parks, National Historical Parks, National Preserves or other units. The count includes the 13 monuments declared by Jimmy Carter in 1978 in Alaska. National Monuments throughout the last century have been a vital stepping stone to building the national park system as we know it.

The following lists in chronological order when Congress incorporated national monuments into new and larger national park system areas.

The two Forest Service-administered Cinder Cone and Lassen Peak National Monuments were transferred to the NPS when Congress incorporated the monuments' lands into Lassen Volcanic National Park in 1916.

Congress abolished the 1916 Sieur de Monts National Monument and incorporated it into the Lafayette National Park in 1919, later renamed Acadia National Park.

The Forest Service-administered Grand Canyon National Monument was incorporated into the Grand Canyon National Park in 1919.

The Forest Service-administered Munkutuweap National Monument was abolished and renamed Zion National Monument and transferred to the NPS in 1918; Congress incorporated the monument into Zion National Park in 1919.

The Forest Service-administered Bryce Canyon National Monument was incorporated into Bryce Canyon National Park in 1928.

Congress abolished the 1923 Carlsbad Caverns National Monument and incorporated it into the Carlsbad Caverns National Park in 1930.

Congress transferred the Forest Service-administered Mount Olympus National Monument to the NPS, abolished it and incorporated it as part of Olympic National Park in 1938.

Congress abolished the 1943 Jackson Hole National Monument and incorporated it into Grand Teton National Park in 1950.

Congress abolished the 1938 Fort Laramie National Monument and incorporated it into Fort Laramie National Historic Site in 1960.

Congress abolished the Meriwether Lewis National Monument and made it part of Natchez Trace National Parkway in 1961. (Congress also abolished the Ackia Battleground National Monument in Mississippi in the same act of 1961 – but Ackia Battlefield was NOT an Antiquities Act monument. Rather it was authorized by Congress in 1935 and proclaimed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1938).

Congress abolished the 1906 Petrified Forest National Monument and incorporated it into Petrified Forest National Park in 1962.

Congress abolished 1929 Badlands National Monument and incorporated it into Badlands National Park in 1968.

Congress abolished the 1929 Arches National Monument and incorporated it into Arches National Park in 1971.

Congress abolished the 1937 Capitol Reef National Monument and incorporated it into Capitol Reef National Park in 1971.

Congress abolished 1961 Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Monument and incorporated it into C&O Canal National Historical Park in 1971.

One abolished monument has a more curious history. Proclaimed in 1939, the Santa Rosa Island National Monument in Florida was abolished by Congress in 1946. These lands are now part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, established by Congress in 1972.

Congress abolished the 1932 Grand Canyon National Monument and 1969 Marble Canyon National Monument by incorporating these two into an expanded Grand Canyon National Park in 1975

Congress abolished the 1918 Katmai National Monument and incorporated it into Katmai National Park in 1980 (ANILCA).

Congress abolished the 1925 Glacier Bay National Monument and incorporated it into Glacier Bay National Park in 1980 (ANILCA)

Congress abolished 13 of the 13 national monuments proclaimed by President Jimmy Carter in Alaska in 1978 and established these areas as national parks, preserves or monuments by congressional charter in 1980 (ANILCA). These are: Bering Land Bridge, Denali, Gates of the Arctic, Glacier Bay, Katmai, Kenai Fjords, Kobuk Valley, Lake Clark, Noatak, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley. Congress repealed the proclamations but kept the “national monument” title for Aniakchak and Cape Krusenstern.

Congress abolished the 1938 Channel Islands National Monument and incorporated it into Channel Islands NP in 1980.

Congress abolished the 1968 Biscayne National Monument and incorporated it into the Biscayne National Park in 1980. (One of three examples of a congressionally-created national monument that was subsequently abolished by incorporation into a larger and renamed unit).

Congress abolished the 1907 Chaco Canyon National Monument and incorporated it into Chaco Culture National Historical Park in 1980.

Congress abolished the 1922 Lehman Caves National Monument and incorporated it into Great Basin National Park in 1986.

Congress abolished the 1907 Gran Quivira National Monument and incorporated it into the congressionally-designated Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument in 1988.

Congress abolished the 1976 Congaree Swamp National Monument and incorporated it into the Congaree Swamp National Park in 1988. (Second of three examples of a congressionally-created national monument that was subsequently abolished by incorporation into a larger and renamed unit).

Congress abolished the 1965 Pecos National Monument and incorporated it into Pecos National Historical Park in 1990. (Third of three examples of a congressionally-created national monument that was subsequently abolished by incorporation into a larger and renamed unit).

Congress abolished the 1908 Tumacacori National Monument (administered by DOI – General Land Office) and transferred to NPS (1918) when it created Tumacacori National Historical Park in 1990.

Congress abolished the 1935 Fort Jefferson National Monument and incorporated it into Dry Tortugas National Park in 1992.

Congress abolished the 1933 Saguaro National Monument and incorporated it into Saguaro National Park in 1994.

Congress abolished the 1933 Death Valley National Monument and incorporated it into Death Valley National Park in 1994.

Congress abolished the 1936 Joshua Tree National Monument and incorporated it into the Joshua Tree National Park in 1994.

Congress abolished the 1933 Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument and incorporated it into the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in 1999.

Congress abolished the 1932 Great Sand Dunes National Monument and incorporated it into Great Sand Dunes National Park in 2000.

Congress abolished the 2001 Minidoka Internment National Monument and converted it to Minidoka National Historic Site in 2008.

Congress abolished the 1908 Pinnacles National Monument and designated it a national park in 2013.

Congress abolished the 2103 First State National Monument in Delaware and renamed the area as the First State National Historical Park in 2014.

Congress incorporated the 2013 Harriet Tubman – Underground Railroad National Monument into the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Park in 2104.