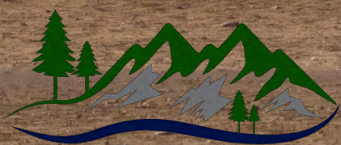
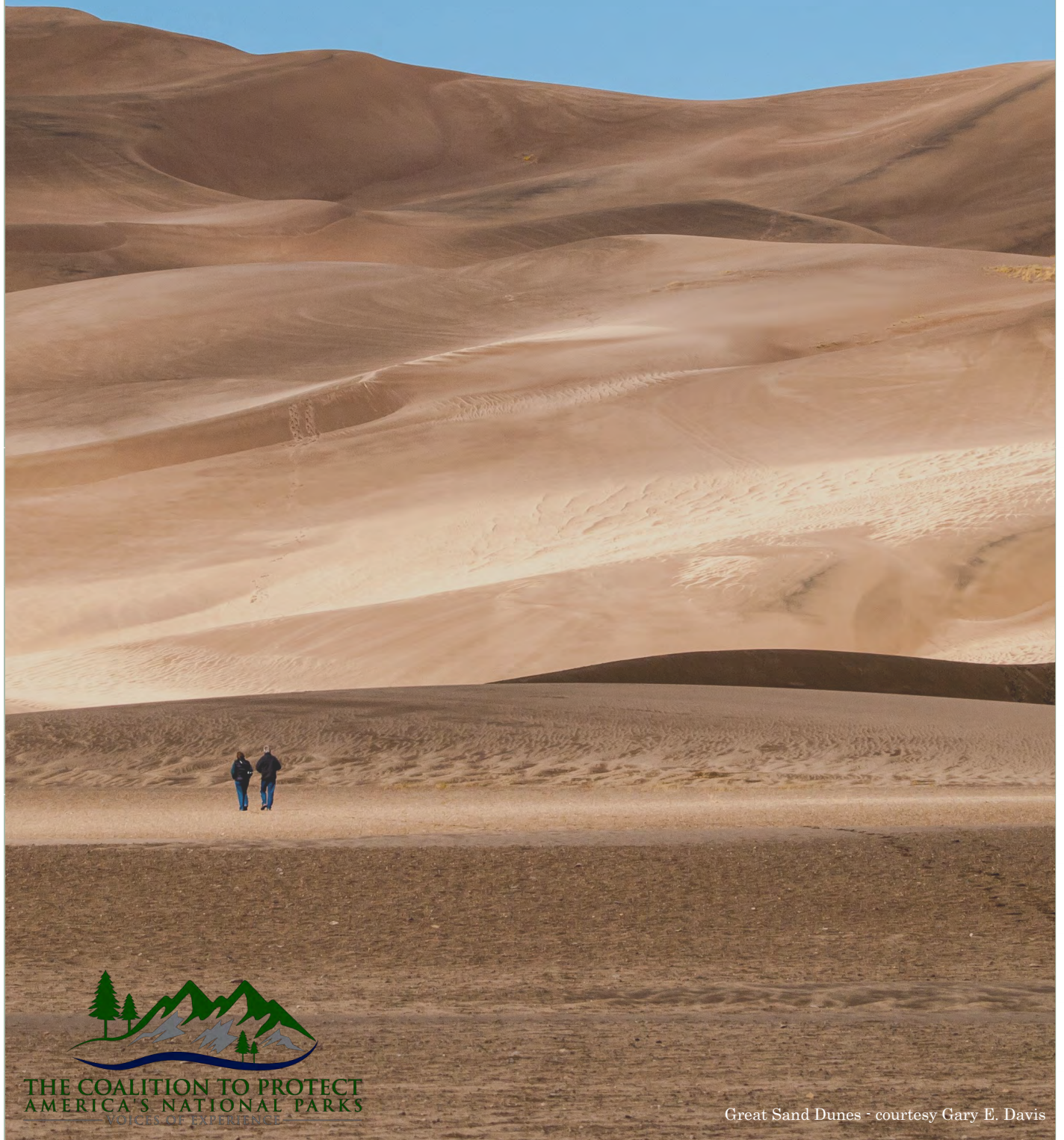


In Support of the Antiquities Act: The Lasting Impacts of National Monuments



THE COALITION TO PROTECT
AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS
VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Great Sand Dunes - courtesy Gary E. Davis

“The President of the United States is authorized in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be National Monuments, and may reserve as a part there of parcels of land, the limits of which in all cases shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.”

~ *Antiquities Act of 1906*

The Antiquities Act is a powerful and bipartisan tool for preserving our irreplaceable resources for future generations. It authorizes the President of the United States to proclaim national monuments on federal lands that contain historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, or other objects of historic or scientific interest.

Use of the Antiquities Act can help to save public lands that are at risk. It allows a President to take prompt action to protect resources that may be vulnerable. And designating a resource as a national monument not only preserves an irreplaceable landscape or structure, it also can provide recreational and economic benefits.

National monuments are managed by numerous agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service. Most national monuments, however, are managed by the National Park Service (NPS).

Currently, there are more than [80 national monuments](#) within the [National Park System](#), although the National Park Service manages over [100 parks](#) that got their start thanks to the Antiquities Act.



Castner Range from the air - courtesy Gary E. Davis



Castner Range—courtesy Janae Renaud Field

National Treasures in Need of Protection

In 2021, President Biden set our first-ever national conservation goal - to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 (30 x 30 initiative)— as part of the administration’s America the Beautiful Plan. In the past year, the President has delivered on his promise to restore the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument.

However, it is time for the administration to make use of the Antiquities Act and set aside other critical landscapes as national monuments, thus ensuring their protection and helping to meet the goals of the 30 x 30 initiative.

There are several efforts underway to designate spaces—which are already in federal ownership or currently state controlled—as national monuments.

In Texas, there is a longstanding, locally driven effort to protect the mountains of the Castner Range and open the lands to the public. Establishing the proposed Castner Range National Monument would safeguard unspoiled land in the Franklin Mountains that is home to diverse vegetation and wildlife. The designation would help protect archaeological and historical resources that date back centuries and help to create more trails and recreational opportunities, which has the additional benefit of [stimulating economic growth for](#) the region.

Similarly, in Nevada, a coalition of Tribes, community members, and elected officials are advocating for the establishment of the [Avi Kwa Ame National Monument](#). This site – which is the Mojave name for Spirit Mountain – sits at the center of the Yuman Tribes’ creation story. Establishing this national monument would be a critical contribution to the preservation of Native American ancestral lands, joining Bears Ears and Gold Butte National Monuments.

Sierra National Forest in California has [thousands of mining claims, timber sales, grazing leases, and private inholdings, activities not typically found in national parks](#). The creation of the Range of Light National Monument would protect the landscape from further development, safeguard critical species habitat, and also unite Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks.

In Oregon, converting parts of the Willamette National Forest and some of the adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to create the [Douglas-Fir National Monument](#) would preserve some of the best old growth forest that still remains and restore a naturally functioning forest landscape.



Avi Kwa Ame

There is also [support](#) to declare the site of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot in Springfield, Illinois, as a national monument. This site is already part of the African American Civil Rights Network and a monument designation would help to ensure the historic and nationally significant events that led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are always remembered.

Finally, there is another movement in Illinois to include the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site under the National Park System and offer additional protections for the ancient mounds, [a significant archeological and cultural resource](#), that represents the people and landscapes that once made up one of America's first cities in the Western Hemisphere

All of these spaces – proposed national monuments - are worthy of protection. President Biden has the opportunity to protect these irreplaceable landscapes and stories for our enjoyment today and the benefit of future generations. As advocates for the protection of our national parks and public lands – including national monuments – we urge President Biden to follow the example of his predecessors and use the Antiquities Act to protect our irreplaceable natural and cultural resources.

Antiquities Act Successes: How Presidents Throughout History Have Used This Bipartisan Tool for Conservation

Here are the stories of five units of the National Park System that were initially designated as national monuments under the Antiquities Act. All of these sites contain important resources that contribute to understanding our nation's collective history and heritage. The national monument designations in the past continue to benefit their local communities and enrich the understanding of our national heritage. The story of our country is stronger thanks to the preservation of these incredible sites.



Acadia National Park— courtesy Gary E. Davis

Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

Humans inhabited the area in and around what is now known as Grand Canyon National Park for thousands of years. Ancestral Puebloans lived there, and Paleo-Indians hunted there. Europeans first explored the area in the 1500s, although it wasn't until the 1800s that European-Americans began to settle in the region.

In 1893, President Benjamin Harrison protected the canyon as part of Grand Canyon Forest Reserve. And in 1903, Theodore Roosevelt visited the Grand Canyon for the first time and found himself awe-struck. "It is beyond comparison," [he said](#) "beyond description; absolutely unparalleled throughout the wide world... Let this great wonder of nature remain as it now is. Do nothing to mar its grandeur, sublimity and loveliness."

Theodore Roosevelt designated the site as Grand Canyon National Monument in 1908, just two years after he signed into legislation the Antiquities Act. Other protections for this incredible landscape followed in the years to come. President Woodrow Wilson made Grand Canyon a national park in 1919 and the United Nations declared the park a World Heritage Site in 1979.

While the national park was enlarged numerous times, there were still lands in need of protection. Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument was designated a national monument by Presidential Proclamation in January 2000, also under the authority of the Antiquities Act. It was [created to](#) protect, among other features, the area's wild and undeveloped characteristics, historical and archeological sites, ecological diversity, and recreation opportunities.

President Roosevelt's decision to declare Grand Canyon a national monument protected an irreplaceable resource that would eventually be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, or a space with outstanding universal value. In addition to protecting natural, historic, and cultural resources, Grand Canyon also provides a huge economic benefit to the region.

According to [figures](#) compiled by the National Park Service, 2.9 million park visitors spent an estimated \$433 million in local gateway regions while visiting Grand Canyon National Park. These expenditures supported a total of 5,730 jobs and \$530 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Grand Canyon National Park.

Thankfully, resources within the park and monument boundaries are protected. However, external threats such as [uranium mines and claims](#) outside the park threaten to pollute the Canyon. The fight continues to ensure the protection of this remarkable resource.



Grand Canyon—courtesy Gary E. Davis

Acadia National Park, Maine

Acadia National Park has long been a place of relaxation and escape. Originally known as Mount Desert Island, this landscape was a prime location for New Englanders to summer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

But the influx of visitors to the island was also a risk to the Acadian landscape. Increasing development of the Bar Harbor area brought about an uptick in private land ownership. In addition, the newly invented [gasoline-powered portable sawmill](#) was a threat to the scenic vistas of mountains, forests, and shorelines.



Acadia National Park—courtesy Gary E. Davis

Several educated, affluent, and conservation minded men, including George Dorr and Charles Eliot, led the push to protect Mount Desert Island. The [Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations](#) was formed for the purpose of "... acquiring, owning, and holding lands and other property in Hancock County for free public use."

The Trustees slowly acquired tracts of land to be protected, including land on the western slope of Cadillac Mountain that was threatened by timber harvesting. Some owners donated land to ensure the protection of a viewshed while other land was purchased to protect lakes or ponds. However, a threat to the group's tax-exempt status – and the potential loss of the protected land – encouraged the Trustees to seek protections for the land at a higher level.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson created Sieur de Monts National Monument, which included thousands of acres of land donated by George Dorr. Two years later, this National Monument became Lafayette National Park (renamed Acadia National Park in 1929), the first national park east of the Mississippi River.

Without the protections afforded to this landscape, first as a national monument and later a national park, it's likely the timber would have been harvested and public access severely restricted (or curtailed entirely) due to private ownership. Instead, thanks to the use of the Antiquities Act decades earlier, the irreplaceable resources at Acadia National Park have been preserved and remain accessible to all Americans.

Acadia National Park is also an [economic benefit](#) to local communities and the state of Maine. In 2020, 2.7 million park visitors spent an estimated \$304 million in local gateway regions while visiting Acadia National Park. These expenditures supported a total of 4,370 jobs, \$135 million in labor income, \$241 million in value added, and \$411 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Acadia National Park.

Great Basin National Park, Nevada

Great Basin National Park is one of the most remote parks in the National Park System. Visitors who make the trip are rewarded by beautiful scenery and the darkest, clearest, and most stable dark skies in the lower 48 states. This unique combination of factors attracts astronomers and physicists from around the world. But when the area now known as Great Basin National Park was first set aside for protection, people were looking down, not up.

Humans have inhabited the Great Basin region for years. Paleoindians hunted the area, and it was settled by the Fremont and later the Pueblo peoples. Spanish explorers traveled the region in the 1700s and the Mormons settled in the area in the 1800s. In the 1880s, miner and rancher [Absalom Lehman](#) discovered an incredible cave system, and began offering cave tours in 1885.



Great Basin National Park– NPS Photo

Tourism to the caves gradually increased and to further facilitate public access (by improving not only the infrastructure of the cave itself but roads to the cave), it was recommended that Lehman Caves be declared a national monument.

In January 1922, President Warren G. Harding declared the site a national monument using the Antiquities Act. The [proclamation](#) stated that the caves were of “unusual scientific interest and importance,” and that the public interest would be served by the protection of as much of the land necessary to protect the caves. While the site was initially managed by the U.S. Forest Service, management of the site (and all national monuments at the time) was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933. Clean-up, rehabilitation, improvements, and expansion of the site followed over the decades.

President Harding’s use of the Antiquities Act was a critical step in assuring the protection of the caves for future generations. But over the years, a movement began to protect a broader – and no less remarkable – landscape of mountains and pines, to preserve the pristine air quality and dark night skies. In 1986, the national monument was abolished, and the site became known as Great Basin National Park, protecting not just what was below the ground but what was above it as well.

Despite its remote location, Great Basin has a sizeable impact on the local economy. In [2020](#), 120 thousand park visitors spent an estimated \$7.1 million in local gateway regions while visiting Great Basin National Park. These expenditures supported a total of 99 jobs, \$2.2 million in labor income, \$3.8 million in value added, and \$7.4 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Great Basin National Park.

Carlsbad Cavern National Park, New Mexico

Carlsbad Caverns National Park protects over 110 limestone caves, significant historic and cultural resources, and a designated wilderness area. It's not only a national park, but a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And it all started as a national monument nearly 100 years ago.

The present-day Carlsbad Caverns National Park was once home to [Indigenous peoples](#). The Mescalero Apache, Zuni Pueblo, and other groups were well acquainted with this piece



Carlsbad Caverns—courtesy Gary E. Davis

of the Chihuahuan Desert. Pictographs and cooking sites can still be found in the park. The region later became a focus of Spanish and European exploration.

The famous caves were likely first explored by [Jim White](#) in 1898, when he noticed clouds of bats flying in and out of the cave. Many of the features and spaces found inside the cave still bear the names given to them by White. He began to give tours of the cave and publicize its existence to the public.

New Mexico became a state in 1912. In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge signed the legislation to designate Carlsbad Caverns a national monument. In the [proclamation](#), he calls Carlsbad Cave a place “of extraordinary proportions and of unusual beauty and variety of natural decoration” and states that, “the public interest would be promoted by reserving this natural wonder as a National Monument, together with as much land as may be needed for the protection.”

The site was redesignated as a national park in 1930. Today, it is a cave system of worldwide significance known for its size, diversity, and beauty. The National Park Service describes it as “one of the best preserved and most accessible cave complexes in the world available for scientific study and public access.”

In [2020](#), 184 thousand park visitors spent an estimated \$12.1 million in local gateway regions while visiting Carlsbad Caverns National Park. These expenditures supported a total of 162 jobs in these local communities as well. But oil and gas development, which is a threat not just to park resources but to the park visitor experience, jeopardizes these economic figures.

Although it was unknown at the time of its founding, Carlsbad Caverns sits at the convergence of the [Delaware and Permian Basins](#), one of our country's most active and profitable oil and gas fields. While the Coalition and other park advocacy groups continue to fight against energy development near the park, the initial national monument designation using the Antiquities Act was critically important in placing the landscape under protection.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado

Human history at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve dates back about 11,000 years. Nomadic hunters and gatherers passed through the site and several Indigenous tribes called the area home. European explorers arrived in the late 17th century and Zebulon Pike first documented the dunes in the early 1800s. African American Buffalo Soldiers patrolled the region in the late 1800s, homesteaders - Hispanic and European-American - built a life in the area, and thousands of gold miners searched the sand for treasure.

Great Sand Dunes is deeply tied to the history of the American experience. It tells the stories of exploration and expansion and highlights the diverse roots of our country. And it reminds us of the darker parts of our history; Indigenous tribes were removed from the land by the U.S. Government in the late 1800s.



Great Sand Dunes—courtesy Gary E. Davis

The physical landscape of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is incredibly diverse as well. It includes nearly 150,000 acres of tundra, alpine lakes, grasslands, forest, wetlands, and the tallest sand dunes in North America.

Efforts to protect Great Sand Dunes started in the 1920s, as tourism to the site increased. The local [Ladies Philanthropic Educational Organization](#) (P.E.O) expressed concern about the protection of the dunes. People were removing sand for construction materials and miners were chemically removing gold from the sand. Water required to keep the dunes stable was being diverted for other purposes. Under the leadership of Elizabeth Spencer, the women formed the Sand Dunes Committee.

These local women reached out to other Ladies P.E.O. Chapters for help with their advocacy work. They lobbied local and state politicians and wrote letters to Washington, D.C. Finally, in March 1937, President Herbert Hoover used the Antiquities Act to designate Great Sand Dunes as the 36th national monument in the National Park System.

The park boundaries were expanded over the subsequent decades. In 1976, a portion of the monument was declared designated wilderness, banning motor vehicles from the dunes. The national monument became a national park and preserve in 2000 and the current Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve was solidified in 2004. It became a certified International Dark Sky Park in 2019.

Decades after the initial protections ensured through the Antiquities Act, visitors come from all over the world to stargaze, see the dunes, and recreate in this unique national park. In [2020](#), 462 thousand park visitors spent an estimated \$29.5 million in local gateway regions while visiting the park. The park is also of deep significance to [nineteen tribes](#) that have maintained active cultural affiliation to the park and surrounding lands.

Now Is the Time to Protect More Public Land

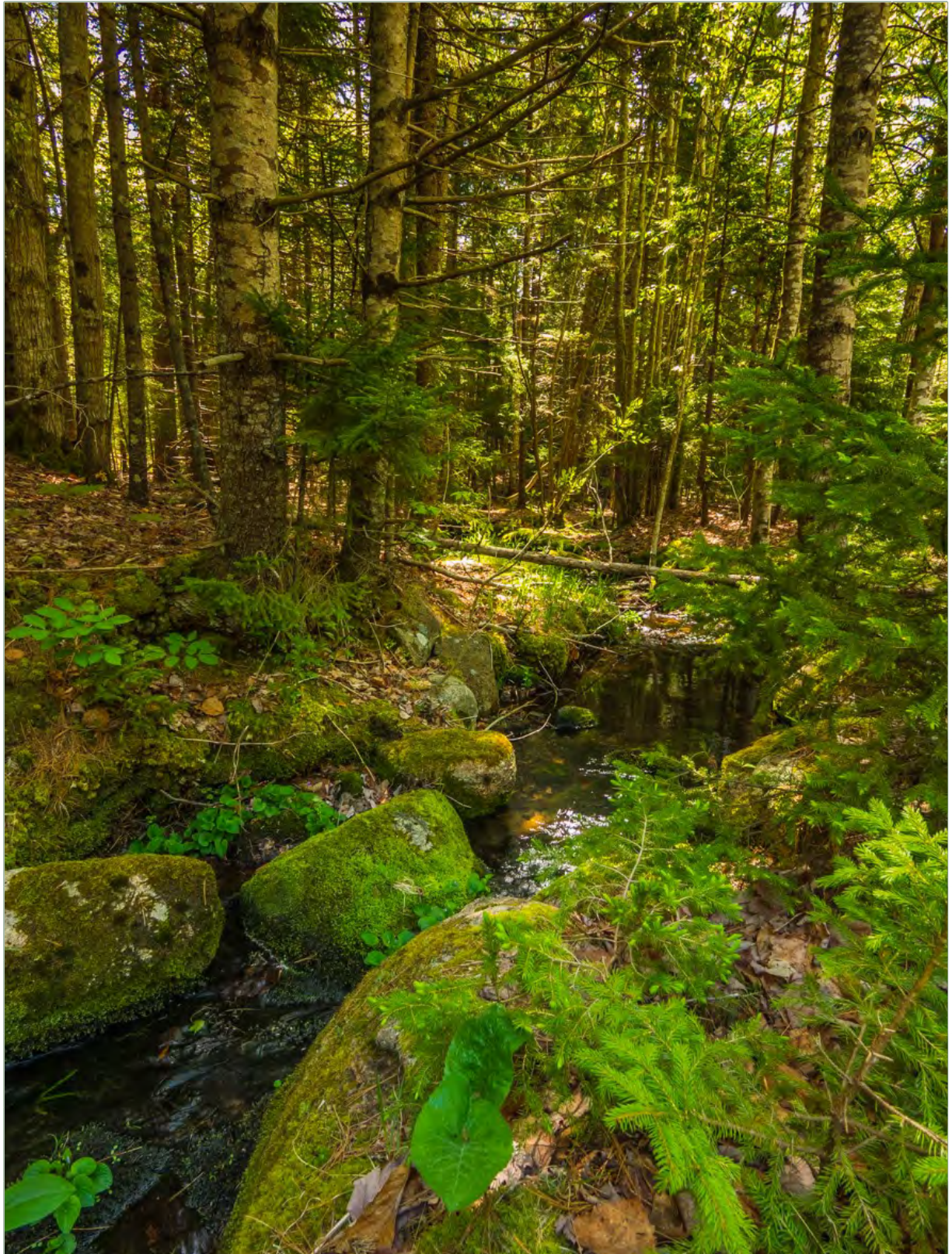
The Antiquities Act is a powerful tool for the protection and conservation of land. 18 of the 22 Presidents have exercised their authority under the Antiquities Act since its passage in 1906. They have created 158 national monuments, including Grand Teton, Zion, Olympic, Statue of Liberty, and the Grand Canyon.

This Act has helped to protect landscapes that tell the story of the American experience, through their physical features or their histories. And often, it has bestowed initial protections on a site and paved the way for additional protections or modifications down the road. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, approximately half of the current national parks were first designated as national monuments.

The Antiquities Act has played a pivotal role in our country's history, and in the history of the National Park Service; but there are still many precious landscapes and resources in need of protection. We urge President Biden to use the Antiquities Act to designate spaces like Castner Range, Avi Kwa Ame, Douglas-Fir, Range of Light, 1908 Springfield Race Riot Site, Cahokia Mounds, and other public lands across the United States, as national monuments, for the enjoyment of Americans today and for the benefit of future generations.



The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks represents over 2,100 current, former, and retired employees and volunteers of the National Park Service, with over 40,000 collective years of stewardship of America's most precious natural and cultural resources. Recognized as the *Voices of Experience*, the Coalition educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System, and mission-related programs of the National Park Service. More information can be found at <https://protectnps.org>.



Acadia—courtesy Gary E. Davis