

MARCH 21, 2023

# FACT SHEET: President Biden Designates Avi Kwa Ame National Monument

*Nevada Landscape Is Sacred to Indigenous Peoples, Protects One of World's Largest Joshua Tree Forests and Connects Wildlife Habitat*

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to protect historically and scientifically important sites, honor culturally significant areas, and conserve and restore our country's treasured outdoor spaces, today President Biden will sign a proclamation establishing the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument. This designation will honor Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples by protecting this sacred Nevada landscape and its historically and scientifically important features, while conserving our public lands and growing America's outdoor recreation economy.

Avi Kwa Ame is considered to be among the most sacred places on Earth by the Mojave, Chemehuevi, and some Southern Paiute people. It is also important to other Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples including the Cocopah, Halchidhoma, Havasupai, Hopi, Hualapai, Kumeyaay, Maricopa, Pai Pai, Quechan, Yavapai, and Zuni Tribes. Its scenic peaks include Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain), which is designated as a Traditional Cultural Property on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its religious and cultural importance. The area is also home to the one of the world's largest Joshua tree forests, and provides continuous habitat or migration corridors for species such as the desert bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, and Gila monster.

At the White House Conservation in Action Summit today, the President will announce additional actions to conserve and restore lands and waters across the nation, including establishing Castner Range National Monument in Texas. The President will also direct the Secretary of Commerce to consider exercising her authority to protect all U.S. waters around the Pacific Remote Islands. These new commitments build on President Biden's record of delivering on the most ambitious land and water conservation agenda in American history.

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to honoring Tribal sovereignty, protecting Tribal homelands, and conducting regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal

Nations. Today's action builds on the President's commitment to protect America's lands and waters through the Administration's America the Beautiful Initiative, which supports locally-led conservation efforts across the country in pursuit of the U.S.'s first national conservation goal.

### **Avi Kwa Ame National Monument**

The Avi Kwa Ame National Monument protects and preserves the rich ecological, historic, cultural, and scenic values of this unique desert landscape. The monument designation protects sacred space for spiritual uses, including Spirit Mountain, which is central to the creation story of many Tribal Nations, while ensuring continued access to hunting, camping, hiking, OHV use, photography, and other recreational activities. The natural springs, natural soundscapes, and dark skies protected within the monument will support Nevada's outdoor recreation economy, while safeguarding these historically and scientifically important treasures for generations to come.

The designation of the new national monument creates one of the largest contiguous areas of protected wildlife habitat in the United States, tying together the protected lands of the Mojave Desert in California to the southwest with the Lake Mead National Recreation Area and other protected areas to the east near the Colorado River. Avi Kwa Ame and the surrounding landscape provide native species – including desert bighorn sheep, Gila monsters, desert tortoises, and Arizona toads – a space to thrive and adapt amid the pressures of a changing climate. The designation also provides protection to an ancient and intact Joshua tree forest that contains Nevada's largest Joshua tree.

To help sustain the health of wildlife populations in Avi Kwa Ame, the national monument proclamation recognizes and reaffirms the State of Nevada's ongoing primary role in the management of wildlife within the monument. Hunting, trapping, wildlife watching, aerial surveys, wildlife infrastructure installation and maintenance, and a wide range of other wildlife management activities will continue to be allowed within the national monument. The proclamation further directs the Interior Department to build on its ongoing partnership with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to explore developing a memorandum of understanding to further improve these collaborative efforts.

Recognizing the critical role that sportsmen and sportswomen have played historically – and continue to play – in restoring and conserving bighorn sheep and other wildlife populations in southern Nevada, the proclamation requires representation from the sportsmen and sportswomen community on a monument advisory committee.

Consistent with direction in the proclamation, the Interior Department will enter into a memorandum of understanding with Tribal Nations to carry out co-stewardship of the monument and will work with local communities to locate and develop a visitor center and other visitor facilities.

The national monument designation recognizes and respects valid existing rights. The proclamation specifies that maintenance and upgrades to water infrastructure for flood control, utilities, water district facilities, wildlife water catchments, and other uses may continue; and that transmission lines, pipelines, and roads can continue to be maintained and upgraded. The proclamation allows for military, commercial, and private flights in and out of existing or future airports in the area. It also does not change the class II air quality designation for the area or affect the State's authority over administering air quality designations.

The national monument spans approximately 506,814 acres of lands managed by the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and National Park Service. All of the land reserved by the proclamation is currently owned by the Federal government; existing State and private lands within the boundary are not included in the monument.

The designation will not slow the positive momentum of clean energy development in the State of Nevada, which will continue to play a leading role in helping the nation meet its goal of permitting 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy by 2025. Outside of the national monument boundaries, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has identified more than 9 million acres of public lands within the State of Nevada that may be appropriate for solar development. Additionally, BLM is currently reviewing more than three dozen proposed renewable energy projects in the state that would add more than 13 GW of potential clean energy generation to the grid if constructed.

### **Background on Antiquities Act Designations**

President Theodore Roosevelt first used the Antiquities Act in 1906 to designate Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. Since then, 18 presidents of both parties, including recent Presidents Trump, Obama, G.W. Bush, and Clinton have used this authority to protect unique natural and historic features in America, including the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, and Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients.

In addition to designating Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, today the President is also taking action to establish Castner Range National Monument in Texas. These are President Biden's

second and third new monument designations, following the creation of the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument in Colorado last fall.

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