



Oregon State Legislature

900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

November 1, 2016

Mike Connor
Deputy Secretary
United State Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
911 NE 11th Avenue, Suite 630
Portland, OR 97232

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
121 SW Salmon Street, Suite 1400
Portland, OR 97204

The Honorable Greg Walden
United States House of Representatives
14 N. Central Ave., Suite 112
Medford, OR 97501

Dear Deputy Secretary and Honorable Members of Congress:

As elected state legislators representing Southern Oregon, we are writing to express our concerns with the proposed expansion of the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument through the federal Antiquities Act.

While we appreciate the Deputy Secretary's recent visit to Ashland to discuss the proposed expansion, it is disappointing that many citizens did not learn about your meeting until after it happened. We encourage the Department of the Interior and our congressional delegation to do more to solicit the opinions of all citizens who will be directly impacted by the doubling of the national monument. But ultimately we do not believe the monument should be expanded without a vote of Congress, as the Antiquities Act is not the correct process for enacting such a significant change in how these lands are managed.

Public support for this proposal is not as widespread as proponents have suggested, especially as more citizens begin to learn of the expansion and how it would affect them, our economy and the use of our federal lands and natural resources. There are still many unanswered questions about the expansion. The Bureau of Land Management office in Medford has been unable to provide accurate maps and data to enable the public to learn more about how the expansion will actually work.

We believe federal lands should be actively managed for multiple uses and multiple benefits. We are concerned the expansion of the national monument will severely limit the ability of the government to manage federal lands, especially when it comes to protecting our communities from catastrophic wildfire.

We are concerned how the proposal will affect forest restoration efforts, timber sales and grazing allotments on local federal lands. The Bureau of Land Management is legally obligated under the federal O&C Act to manage BLM O&C lands on a sustained yield basis. In addition to the BLM's new Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon, which already sets aside over 75 percent of the land base from timber production, pulling more harvestable O&C lands into a national monument would have serious implications for our communities and the State of Oregon.

The monument expansion will further threaten ranching and our vulnerable forest products infrastructure in Southern Oregon. Combined with the BLM's continuing failure to honor the O&C Act, and the expiration of Secure Rural Schools support payments, the monument will only further encumber financially-distressed O&C counties from funding essential public services such as law enforcement and public and mental health services.

Because many of these services are required under federal law, they may eventually be transferred to the state government and could impact the state budget and state taxpayers. Rather than expanding the national monument, we would respectfully encourage the Obama Administration and our Congressional delegation to focus on comprehensive forest management legislation for Southern Oregon, including restoring sustainable timber harvests on O&C lands.

We are also concerned that the expansion of the national monument will restrict access into, and within, public and private lands in the area. Restricting access through a monument designation will affect public safety and recreational and hunting opportunities, and deny many citizens in our communities the ability to enjoy their public lands.

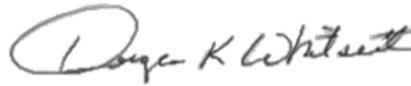
In closing, we do not believe expanding the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument – especially through the Antiquities Act at the end of President Obama’s administration – is the best solution for protecting these lands for the future or for actively engaging and earning the trust of local communities surrounded by federal lands. Rather than expanding the monument through the federal Antiquities Act, we believe our citizens would be better served by having this proposal considered, and voted upon, by their elected representatives in Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,



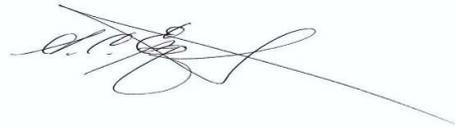
Senator Herman Baertschiger Jr.
Senate District 2



Senator Doug Whitsett
Senate District 28



Representative Mike McLane
House District 55



Representative Sal Esquivel
House District 6



Representative Carl Wilson
House District 3



Representative Duane Stark
House District 4



Representative Gail Whitsett
House District 56