

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 1, 2016

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It has come to our attention that a number of national monument designations being considered by your administration could exacerbate ongoing crises related to western drought and wildfires. While any unilateral designation acted upon without local input or despite local opposition is deeply concerning, the proposed conversion of California's Sierra Nevada National Forest into a national monument and the expansion of Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument are particularly concerning given severe water shortages regionally and increasing wildfire threats.

In California, local communities have voiced opposition to a proposed Sierra Nevada National Monument. The Friant Water Authority and Friant North Authority, which collectively represent 15 water districts and almost a million acres of irrigated agricultural lands, recently wrote Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, stating that "establishing the Sierra National Forest as a National Monument would affect future opportunities to build additional storage in the upper watersheds." Resulting "restrictions on land use would interfere with forest and fire management activities in the Sierra forests," the Authorities added.<sup>1</sup>

In Oregon, areas under the proposed expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument possess equally concerning ecological and management challenges. The areas include vast acreage at high risk of catastrophic wildfire and in need of treatment.<sup>2</sup> A national monument designation would further restrict already abysmal federal management activities to improve forest health and treat high-risk, fire-prone areas.<sup>3</sup> Further, the proposed expansion primarily includes O&C lands, which Congress provided for permanent forest production under the O&C Lands Act (Public Law 75-405). The Solicitor General for the Department of the Interior previously affirmed that the President lacks authority under the Antiquities Act to include O&C lands in any monument designation. The Association of O&C Counties recently brought these concerns, among others, to the attention of the Department of the Interior.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/ltr\\_s\\_jewell\\_national\\_monument\\_10172016.pdf](http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/ltr_s_jewell_national_monument_10172016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/American\\_Forest\\_Resource\\_Council\\_Letter.pdf](http://naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/American_Forest_Resource_Council_Letter.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/08601-0004-41.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/merkley\\_connor\\_1014162.pdf](http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/merkley_connor_1014162.pdf)

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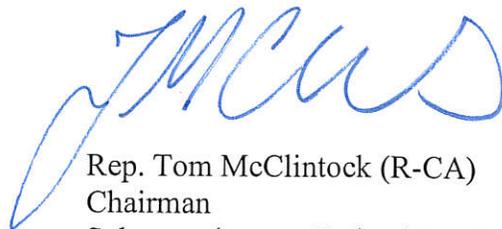
For generations, restrictive federal policies have created enormous problems and economic distress for western communities and made responsible stewardship of our natural resources nearly impossible. Proposing controversial national monument designations is an utterly irresponsible use of taxpayer resources when many communities are suffering from severe drought and are at imminent risk of catastrophic wildfire that will destroy life and property. Instead, your administration should be focusing on removing dead and dying trees, drastically reducing the threat of fire<sup>5</sup> and working vigorously to protect existing water supplies and moving forward on new multi-purpose water storage projects.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than act on these designations and make matters worse, we call upon you and your administration to work with these communities and Congress to alleviate federal barriers to greater forest health<sup>7</sup> and water abundance.

Sincerely,



Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT)  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources



Rep. Tom McClintock (R-CA)  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands



Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR)



Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-CA)

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.uniondemocrat.com/localnews/3808805-151/house-passes-forest-legislation>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2015/07/16/house-gop-set-to-pass-another-california-water-bill>

<sup>7</sup> [http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/daines.feinstein.letter\\_to\\_energy\\_bill\\_conferees.10.3.2016pdf.pdf](http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/daines.feinstein.letter_to_energy_bill_conferees.10.3.2016pdf.pdf)