



Conservation
Lands
Foundation

Protecting America's Heritage

October 11, 2017

Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Opposition to H.R. 3990, a clear attack on the Antiquities Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Conservation Lands Foundation, I write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 3990, which is a radical, aggressive legislative attack on the Antiquities Act, the law that allows for the protection of our most iconic national parks and monuments.

Since its enactment in 1906, the Antiquities Act has been one of our nation's most critical conservation tools for preserving our nation's most important public lands and waters. Our national monuments, national parks, and other protected public lands and waters unite all Americans by protecting our shared heritage for future generations to enjoy. The sheer diversity of historic, cultural, and natural treasures that have been protected by the Antiquities Act is the reason why hundreds of groups representing sportsmen, cultural heritage organizations, communities of faith, conservation, small businesses, historic preservation, and many others all oppose efforts to undermine this vital law.

This bill, should it become law, would undermine the Antiquities Act and the protection of public lands by:

- **Radically altering the definition of antiquities and what can be protected in a national monument.** The bill would eliminate “natural geographic features and objects not made by humans” from being protected in future national monuments. If this new definition had been applied when the Antiquities Act was signed into law in 1906, many of the national monuments and parks we enjoy today, including the Grand Canyon, would not exist. It also would eliminate wildlife habitat from protection, a direct affront to sportsmen. Also, the courts have repeatedly upheld the law's definition of antiquities, as well as the President's authority under the law.
- **Limiting the size of new national monuments, creating illegitimate obstacles for the designation of boundaries based on the location of existing nearby national monument boundaries, and imposing unnecessary checks on presidential authority to declare new national monuments.** These arbitrary limits would block the creation of new national monuments, and would change the original intent of the Antiquities Act, which was to provide the President with the authority to safeguard public lands expeditiously. It would also virtually eliminate the possibility of protecting undiscovered cultural heritage sites that are found within a close proximity to other national monuments, a direct attack on Native American tribes and their heritage.
- **Rejecting the original intent of the Antiquities Act through the codification of presidential authority to reduce national monuments.** This would not only give presidents the authority to erase



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vast portions of national monuments, but also makes clear that President Trump does not currently have the authority to reduce existing national monument boundaries and undercuts Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's recommendations resulting from Executive Order 13792.

This bill is a clear effort to gut the Antiquities Act, restrict the ability to designate new national monuments or national parks, and protect America's most spectacular and significant scenic, natural, historical, cultural and archaeological sites. With this in mind, Conservation Lands Foundation urges you to stand with our nation's public lands and waters and the millions of Americans who support them by OPPOSING H.R. 3990.

Sincerely

David Feinman
Director of Government Affairs