

PREPARED BY
FRIENDS OF PLUMAS WILDERNESS
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

FEATHER RIVER
CANYONS NATIONAL
MONUMENT PROPOSAL

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INTRODUCTION

Friends of Plumas Wilderness and partners are soliciting public input for a proposed national monument in the Upper Feather River Watershed. This document seeks to answer questions and provide a forum for conversation.

The upper Feather River watershed is the headwaters of the State Water Project, providing drinking water to 27 million people throughout California. Large swaths of forests in all forks of the Feather River burned at high severity in the Camp (2018), North Complex (2020), and Dixie (2021) fires. Friends of Plumas Wilderness is heading up a locally led, nationally-scaled effort to conserve, connect, and restore the lands and waters of our region to build resilience in the face of the social, economic, and ecological upheaval wrought by the wildfires of the last five years.

GET INVOLVED

Every aspect of our proposal is open for discussion and input. Over the next months, the national monument coalition will host informational sessions, public input meetings, and focus groups. Additionally, there are opportunities to provide your ideas and input through written comment on this [comment form](#) or through email at info@plumaswilderness.org.

[Join a Working Group](#)

[Ask a question or share an idea](#)

Sign our petition of support (coming soon!)

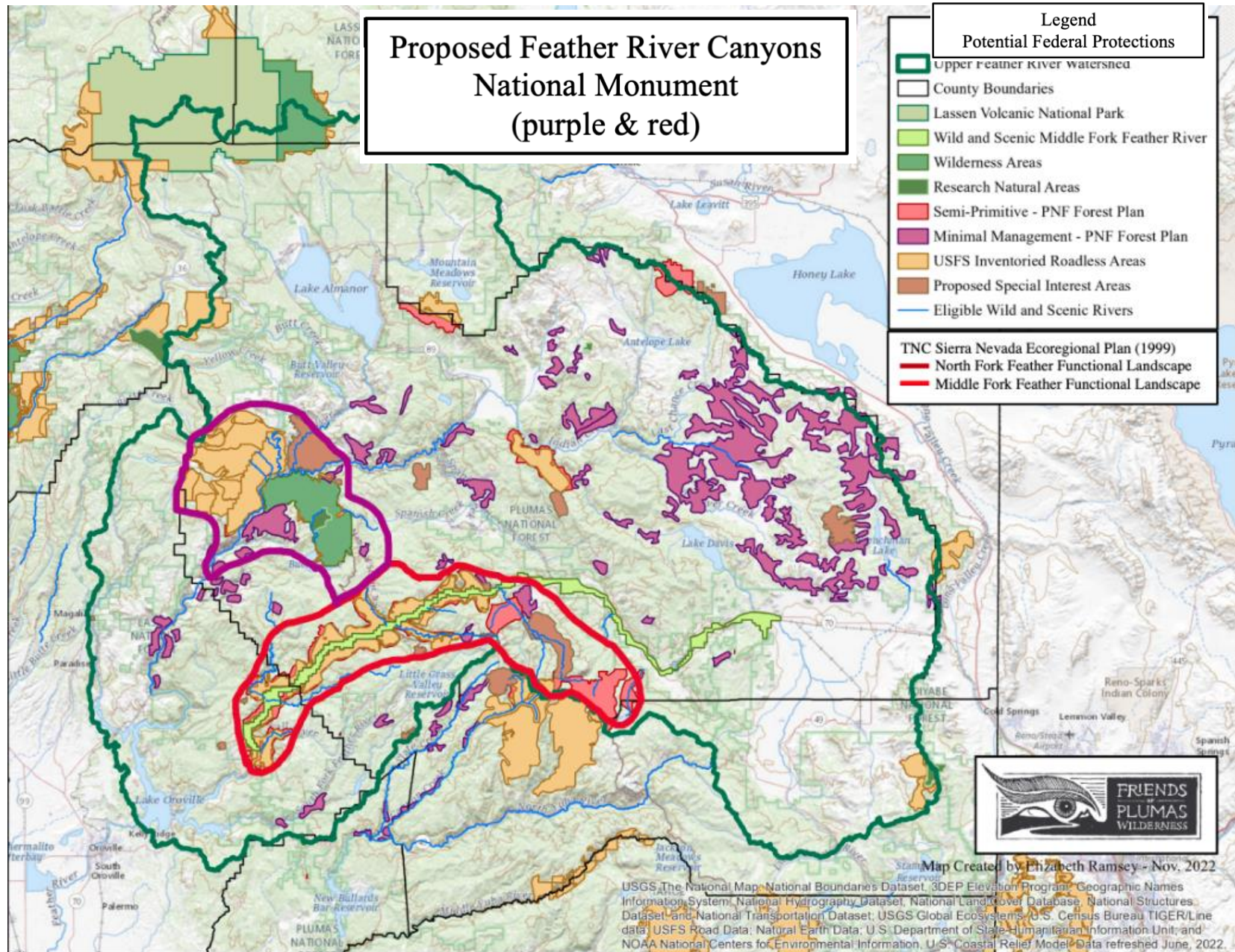
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MAP



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Several categories have been identified to organize this Q&A document - but more can be added! Questions were solicited before and during Friends of Plumas Wilderness' November 15th and 16th, 2022, events in Tobin and Quincy, and during conversations before and after. This is a living document and will be updated as additional questions come up and information becomes available.

WHAT, WHERE, WHY?

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How is a national monument different from a national park?

Purpose

The primary difference lies in the reason for preserving the land: national parks are protected due to their scenic, inspirational, educational, and recreational value. National monuments have objects of historical, cultural, and/or scientific interest, so their content is quite varied.

Process of Designation

National parks are designated by Congress. National monuments can be designated by Presidential Proclamation under the Antiquities Act or by an act of Congress.

Managing Agencies

All national parks are administered by the National Park Service. National monuments are managed by eight federal agencies.¹

Size

National parks and national monuments both vary dramatically in size. The smallest national park is 0.02 acres and the largest is 13.18 million acres. The smallest national monument is 0.34 acres and the largest is 8.61 million acres.

How does the 1906 Antiquities Act work in 2022?

The Antiquities Act was the first U.S. law to provide general legal protection of cultural and natural resources of historic or scientific interest on federal lands. The 1906 law is extremely

¹ National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Energy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Armed Forces, and U.S. Air Force

flexible and has been used to protect monuments as different as the Statue of Liberty (1924) and the Grand Canyon (1908).

The Antiquities Act remains relevant because its use has evolved to meet the desires of a changing society, such as with Tribal co-management at Bears Ears National Monument.

The proposed Feather River Canyons National Monument aims to restore forests using Indigenous knowledge and the best available science.

In simple terms: A locally led proposal will be developed, submitted to the federal government for consideration and negotiation, then the proposal goes to the President who develops a proclamation to create the national monument.

It is typical that within the presidential proclamation a management plan is required to be developed within three years, led by local interests.

How big is the proposed monument?

The proposed monument could range in size anywhere between 200,000 acres and 400,000 acres. Our coalition seeks [your input](#) on where boundaries should be!

What are the threats?

National Forests, including the Plumas, face four major threats: [Wildfire](#), [Invasive Species](#), [Loss of Open Spaces](#), and [Unmanaged Recreation](#), as identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in 2006. Wildfire and forest health issues are of primary concern. National monument coalition members strongly support Forest Service efforts to protect communities from wildfire. In addition, we need a plan for aggressive fuels reduction in the rugged and remote portions of the watershed.

Because our region lacks protections and is the headwaters of the State Water Project, providing drinking water to 27 million Californians, we are vulnerable to water development and diversions. Protecting our free-flowing rivers and streams benefits people, ecosystems, and wildlife.

Monument coalition members strongly feel that the proposed national monument is protecting these special places *for* something, not just *against* something. We are protecting it for future generations. For healthy watersheds. For critical wildlife habitats. For the traditional knowledge and practices of the Maidu who have inhabited this region for generations.

What special values and areas would be designated as a national monument?

While the specific boundary of the proposed national monument is still being determined, it is important to note that our coalition is particularly interested in creating a monument at the watershed scale. Our first priority in determining the boundary is meaningful collaboration with Indigenous peoples within our watershed.

The map on page 5 shows the general area we are evaluating for our proposal in heavy red and purple lines. Where the national monument boundary ultimately ends up depends on local input, and other considerations like cultural landscapes of interest to Tribes; watershed boundaries, landforms, roads; national forest lands, management prescriptions and designations; county boundaries; and critical wildlife habitats and plant communities.

We aim to protect cultural landscapes, healthy watersheds, and critical habitat.

Cultural Landscapes

The mountains, canyons, rivers, streams, and springs of the Feather River are home to Maidu Indians and have special cultural value because of their long relationship with the land. The national monument contains numerous ceremonial and cultural sites – trails, villages, gathering sites, grinding rocks, and burial grounds. Traditional Knowledge of ecosystems and processes, such as fire, were disregarded by dominant culture and have led to undesirable consequences, like biodiversity loss and uncontrollable wildfires. Indigenous knowledge can help guide us towards a more sustainable future.

There are many historical resources worth protecting as well. The California National Historical Trail crosses the proposed national monument where African American explorer Jim Beckwourth pioneered a route across the Sierra Nevada in 1850. The area contains numerous historical Gold Rush mining sites, ghost towns, artifacts, and trails. Unique voices such as Louise Amelia Clapp, a.k.a. Dame Shirley, are also present. Within the proposed national monument is the site of the first documented ski race in the Western Hemisphere at Onion Valley in the winter of 1861.

Healthy Watersheds

In light of the recent devastating fires in the region, a more focused and aggressive approach to conservation, restoration, and adaptive management of forests is much needed.

The North and Middle Forks of the Feather River begin in the snow-covered mountains of the Southern Cascades and Northern Sierra Nevada and flow to Lake Oroville, the primary reservoir of the California State Water Project, providing drinking water to more than 27

million people. The headwaters of the North Fork Feather River originate in the Southern Cascades within Lassen Volcanic National Park and the Middle Fork begins in Sierra Valley, the largest valley in the Sierra Nevada.

The Middle Fork Feather River was one of eight Wild & Scenic Rivers designated with the passage of the 1968 Act and seventeen Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers have been identified on the North and Middle Forks of the Feather River within the boundaries of the Monument.

Critical Habitat

The Upper Feather River Watershed is a biodiversity hotspot spanning nine distinct ecoregions that is home to at least 75 animal and 143 plant species of special concern. Its dramatic elevational range and geologic diversity allow for life to thrive in numerous and unique ways, unmatched by other regions of the Sierra Nevada.

The clean and cold waters of the Feather River and its tributaries provide essential habitat for wild trout, federally threatened North Fork foothill yellow-legged frogs, and federally endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs. Old-growth and mature conifer forests, those that remain, provide critical habitat for California spotted owls and northern goshawks. Elk inhabit the northern portion of the proposed monument and the eastern portion provides critical deer habitat.

Scenic & Recreational Resources

The national monument proposal includes many scenic wonders and recreational resources. For example, there are stunning granite domes and plutons (Big Bald Rock, Bald Rock Dome, Grizzly Dome); abundant waterfalls, including Feather Falls, Curtain Falls, and Seven Falls on Fall River; and unique geologic features like Little Volcano (limestone), Frog Rock (soapstone), and Red Hill (the largest serpentinite terrane in the northern Sierra).

The Feather River National Scenic Byway travels through 25 miles of the Monument. The Scenic Byway parallels the upper reaches of the Wild & Scenic Middle Fork Feather River and through the deepest section of the North Fork Canyon. The Monument contains the 13,764-acre Feather Falls Scenic Area.

From the easily accessible Lakes Basin Recreation Area to the remote portions of the Middle Fork Feather River, like Bald Rock Canyon, the Monument provides a diversity of recreation opportunities. The hard-to-get-to Middle Fork Canyon and Nelson Creek provide some of the best trout fishing in California and have been designated Wild Trout Waters by the State.

The Middle Fork Feather River is the premier Class V multi-day kayak expedition in California, attracting whitewater enthusiasts from around the world. The Pacific Crest National Scenic

Trail traverses 65 miles of the National Monument, including 14 miles within the Bucks Lake Wilderness. Feather Falls and Hartman Bar are National Recreation Trails within the National Monument.

Thirty more hiking trails and a half-dozen routes allow visitors to explore deep into the remote canyons of the National Monument or high into the surrounding mountains. Four unique Off-Highway Vehicle trails provide access to the inner canyon of the Middle Fork and there are abundant opportunities to explore the canyon rims by vehicle or bicycle.

Visitors can also ride horseback, snowshoe, ski, and snowmobile in the proposed national monument. Local resorts, restaurants, and retail businesses will likely benefit from increased visitation to the region with the establishment of a national monument.

Would the land be transferred to the National Park Service?

No. The U.S. Forest Service, who is the current land manager, would continue to manage the land. It is possible that collaborative management between the Forest Service and local tribes could be appropriate.

What does national monument designation mean for the Middle Fork Feather?

The area of the Middle Fork Feather River to be included in Feather River Canyons National Monument is yet to be determined. Only a quarter mile on either side of the Middle Fork Feather is protected under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. This leaves the rest of the watershed and the tributaries of the Middle Fork vulnerable to water diversion and development, such as large-scale mining, road-building, and commercial logging.

There are a dozen tributaries to the Middle Fork that are proposed to be protected in Feather River Canyons National Monument, such as Nelson Creek, Jamison Creek, and Fall River. Including these waterways in the national monument will keep them free-flowing and protect their watersheds.

TRIBES

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Collaborative Management - how does it work?

Collaborative management in a national monument first occurred at Bears Ears in Utah where five tribes from the region co-wrote the initial proposal (2015) and management plan (2022) for the monument. Because the 1906 Antiquities Act allows for the president to

protect prehistoric, historic, and scientific 'objects' 'in his discretion', this broad presidential authority was used to allow for collaborative management.

What it means in implementation is that Tribes and agency officials will work together to make joint management decisions. The government does not give authority of the US Forest Service lands to the Tribes, but they have a 'seat at the table' when management decisions are made.

What about non-federally recognized Tribes?

While our coalition recognizes and respects the sovereignty of all Tribal Nations, due to legal limitations beyond our control, non-federally recognized Tribes need to partner with federally recognized tribes to most effectively voice their concerns.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & PROCESS

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Is there a formal process for public involvement?

A coalition of organizations working for national monument designation would negotiate with the Forest Service on what would be included in the presidential proclamation. The public would be involved with the development of a management plan per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Informally, our coalition seeks input from the public in all ways. Over the next months, the national monument coalition will host informational sessions, public input meetings, and focus groups. Additionally, there are opportunities to provide your ideas and input through written comment on this [comment form](#) or through email at info@plumaswilderness.org.

Could the national monument get reduced in size once established?

If a national monument has strong local support, it would be highly unlikely that a future president would reduce the size of it.

What is the timeline?

Now is the time to promote the national monument idea. The Biden Administration is supportive of national monuments and the area under consideration desperately needs an updated plan, which could be mandated by the President. Gaining broad local support is essential. We plan to post a petition where you can show your support very soon!

Here is a general timeline - please realize that it requires a great deal of flexibility and adapting to circumstances.

Spring 2023 Tribal outreach continues
Outreach to public continues
Coalition working groups form and begin meeting regularly (including USFS)
Draft Key Reports²

Fall 2023 Field check boundaries
Finalize proposal
Tribal and other public support

Winter 2023 Launch campaign for presidential proclamation

2024 Feather River Canyons National Monument designated

2027 Locally-led management plan completed

Is there a process for public input or has FoPW already made up their mind?

We are at the very beginning of the process for determining where, and indeed if, a national monument is right for our region. We started internally, and are now expanding to local Tribes, [working groups](#) on a range of topics, and reaching out to the general public.

Every aspect of our proposal is open for discussion and input. Over the next months, the national monument coalition will host informational sessions, public input meetings, and focus groups. Additionally, there are opportunities to provide your ideas and input through written comment on this [comment form](#) or through email at info@plumaswilderness.org.

This is news to me! When did you start working on it?

Since November 7th, 2018, when the Friends of Plumas Wilderness film “Visions of the Lost Sierra” had its debut at Quincy’s Town Hall Theatre and the idea of making the Middle Fork a National Monument was first suggested, there have been many events, field trips, and informational pieces published in local newspapers, on social media, and elsewhere.

In February 2022, Friends of Plumas Wilderness launched its Protect Plumas initiative, which started with a watershed-wide analysis of lands and waters to be conserved. The group reached out to organizations, elected officials, and boards throughout the region to present our vision and gather feedback. A public opinion survey was conducted between March 1 and July 6, 2022, with 380 people responding.

² Topics include Tribal / cultural resources, climate & habitat connectivity, hydrology, forest health & fuels reduction, biological resources, economic benefits, geology, scenic resources, recreation, historical resources. All are welcome to participate!

We apologize if you haven't had a chance to learn about the national monument idea until recently, but we welcome your input! Follow us on social media, join our mailing list, or become a member of Friends of Plumas Wilderness.

Is this a 'land grab'?

The lands that are proposed to be included in the national monument are currently managed by the US Forest Service for the benefit of the American people. No private lands will be transferred to public ownership unless there is express consent and interest by a willing seller to do so. Current uses, activities, and access will be maintained.

FOREST HEALTH & MANAGEMENT

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Does national monument designation allow forest health work?

We understand the need to reduce fuels and use prescribed fire across the watershed and we strongly support Forest Service community protection efforts, but these efforts will fall short if we do not address all lands in the watershed. National monument designation would require a plan be written within three years that would address fuels reduction and prescribed fire in the most rugged and remote portions of the watershed.

The Plumas National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan is antiquated, encourages high densities of trees, and does not allow prescribed fire in Wilderness. We need a new plan that incorporates best available science and Indigenous knowledge. And we need it ASAP.

Does national monument designation allow wildfire suppression activities?

No federal land designation, including Wilderness, impedes fire suppression efforts. Monument coalition members would like to see increased proactive fuels management instead of an unending emergency response as the primary tool for land management.

ACCESS

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Will access - like motorized access - change or be limited by national monument designation?

Existing US Forest system roads and trails within the proposed national monument boundary would remain open and use would not be changed. Additional routes could be developed if they do not adversely impact values the monument was established to protect.

The use of motorized recreation within the proposed national monument boundaries would be determined by the national monument's management plan.

Will national monument designation lead to overcrowding?

The Feather River Region is being promoted and we are being discovered. Public input would guide the national monument plan, which would determine where recreation and tourism would be encouraged and discouraged. Recreation and tourism could be promoted where infrastructure exists and the community desires it. As it is, the area is being promoted, often without direct public involvement.

Will there be an entrance fee?

Similar monuments managed by the Forest Service and BLM, Berryessa-Snow Mountain and Cascade-Siskiyou, do not have an entrance fee. Fees could be collected in areas if desired. Some regional parks do not collect fees from local residents. This fee collection strategy could be employed in portions of the proposed monument if desired by the community.

Are pets allowed?

Similar monuments managed by the Forest Service allow dogs. Dogs might be required to be on a leash in areas with high use.

IMPACTS ON US FOREST SERVICE & COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

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Why is a national monument better than an updated forest plan?

The national monument proclamation could mandate a plan be written within three years of designation. The National Forest Management Act requires each National Forest to update their management plan every 10-15 years, yet the Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan ("Forest Plan") has not been updated since it was published in 1988.

We need a plan for the rugged and remote portions of the Plumas and Lassen National Forests that addresses fuels and post-fire restoration as soon as possible.

How does national monument designation affect existing land ownership?

Nothing in the establishment of the proposed national monument will affect any private property rights, any trust lands held by the State of California, any political subdivision of the State of California, or any special district within the boundaries of the national monument.

What about new infrastructure and maintenance of existing facilities (visitor center, roads, etc.)?

Designation would allow the development of infrastructure (roads, visitor center) if it is desired by local communities and does not adversely impact values the monument was established to protect. Similar monuments managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have information kiosks but do not have visitor centers. Conservation groups associated with national monuments, including Friends of Plumas Wilderness, can help fund maintenance and development.

How would the proposed national monument be staffed? Who would enforce laws there?

Existing law enforcement jurisdictions would remain as they are today. The monument management plan could address staffing and law enforcement needs.

Will the US Forest Service get more funding if a national monument is designated?

The Forest Service would continue to manage lands within the monument. Congressional allocation of funds for a national monument is the exception, not the rule. The national

monument coalition would work to secure funding from a variety of sources (grants, foundations, donors) to develop the monument management plan and for future work within the monument.

Can livestock grazing occur within the national monument?

Existing grazing leases and permits in the proposed national monument will be allowed to continue, but no new grazing leases will be issued. Grazing will be managed with the same laws and regulations as on other land managed by the US Forest Service.

Does national monument designation mean 'hands off' land management and no timber removal?

We need an 'all hands on deck' approach to forest management, not a 'hands off' approach. Feather River Canyons National Monument aims to protect healthy watersheds in the rugged and remote portions of the Upper Feather River Watershed by engaging a coalition of organizations to acquire needed funding and use all fuels reduction tools available.

Why can't this area just stay as is - multiple-use land managed by the US Forest Service?

National monument designation could provide protection against water development, large-scale mining, road building, and conversion of forests into plantations. Because the Upper Feather River Watershed lacks protections, when compared to state and national averages, we will likely become a target for extractive uses unless we protect more lands and waters.

In addition to extractive uses, our local lands and waters are threatened by climate change and wildfire. Sustainable management of land is among the most promising solutions to the climate crisis. Given recent wildfires, our region needs restoration. Restoring more fire resilient forests that can sequester carbon dioxide for the long haul would help our local communities and our planet.

ECONOMICS & COMMUNITY

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How does national monument designation affect local communities?

Positive business growth was associated with areas adjacent to 14 national monuments designated between 1991 and 2014, according to a 2020 study. Job sectors with the most growth were: hotels, business services, health services, construction, and real estate.

Will my private property be impacted?

National monuments protect “existing rights,” including private property rights. Our coalition will work closely with private landowners to determine final boundaries. If owners of private inholdings do not support the national monument, we will redraw the boundary to avoid that area.

How will other local proposals and initiatives be affected?

The national monument proposal is emerging from the community, as are other proposals, like Sierra Buttes Trails Stewardship’s Connected Communities project. Like Connected Communities, the development of the national monument plan will require public input per the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposed national monument has little overlap with the proposed ‘recreation zones’ that Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship is focusing on. Our coalition is working closely with SBTS.

Could this national monument become a national park someday? What might that mean for locals?

Of the nation’s 63 national parks, 27 of them started out as national monuments. The designation of a national park requires an act of Congress.

A recent [article](#) in *The Guardian* described the impacts of increased visitation to Joshua Tree on local residents. Factors like proximity to a major urban area (Los Angeles is 2 hours away) and the COVID pandemic likely influenced this increase in visitation.

Won’t this lead to ‘loving the area to death?’

The goal of designating a national monument is not to attract more visitors to our region. Coalition members aim to conserve local Indigenous knowledge, forests and free-flowing rivers, and key wildlife habitat. We strongly believe conserving these values far outweighs the risk of attracting more visitors.

Several organizations in the Upper Feather River Watershed actively and effectively promote recreation opportunities available in our area. The local economy has been and continues to shift from one of extraction and resource production toward recreation and tourism. Designation of a national monument would mandate a management plan be written for the area.

Visitors are already coming. We need a plan if we wish to keep the 'lost' in Lost Sierra.

FUNDING

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How will the new national monument be funded, especially the collaborative management idea?

USFS funds allocated through Congress are not the only source for the implementation of the national monument management plan. Grants, foundation dollars, and donations are also tools for funding.

For example, the State of California has allocated significant funding for the [30x30 initiative](#), with approximately \$2.5 billion allocated in the 2022 budget. Because the proposed national monument seeks to protect critical wildlife corridors and habitat, protect key freshwater sources, and improve forest health and fire resilience and increase carbon sequestration, it could qualify for these funds.

Investing in forest health and fire resilience can pay off through reducing spending in emergency situations. The Dixie Fire cost \$637.4 million (over \$6 million / day) to suppress (not including losses or insurance): it burned nearly one million acres, making it the largest and most expensive wildfire to contain in state history.

What if a less conservation-minded administration takes office in D.C.?

Since the Antiquities Act passed in 1906, 16 of 19 presidents - from Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Biden - have used their authority to designate national monuments.

In 2017 the Trump administration conducted a review of 27 major designations under the Antiquities Act and then significantly reduced the size of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. These actions were challenged in federal court, and President Biden restored the original areas in 2021. This

was the only monument reduction in the 100+ years of the Antiquities Act's existence, and it was found to be illegal.

What plans does Friends of Plumas Wilderness have for more protections?

Friends of Plumas Wilderness does not plan to advocate for the designation of more than one national monument in the Upper Feather River Watershed.

Opportunities for additional permanent protections in our watershed are greatest on multiple use lands managed by the US Forest Service. USFS lands in the northern Sierra rank among the top 5% of all USFS and BLM lands in the lower 48 states for their conservation value.

Our first priority is a campaign to designate the Feather River Canyons National Monument. Wild & Scenic River designation is our second priority. Our third priority is the creation of more Research Natural Areas. Wilderness designation is our fourth priority.

Should we propose something more durable?

The current amount of protected lands in the Upper Feather River Watershed is only about 7% total - 4% public lands and 3% private lands. Compared to the U.S. as a whole, which has 12% protected lands, and California, at 24% protected lands, our region has a significant gap in protections.

Our goal is to protect 30% of the watershed to conserve our region's amazing biodiversity and connect people to nature by 2030. A national monument is the easiest lift with the most area protected. But it takes a movement - our entire community - to make it happen. We hope you will join our coalition. For cultural landscapes, healthy watersheds, and critical habitats. For future generations.