

PREPARED BY
FRIENDS OF PLUMAS WILDERNESS
NOVEMBER 2022



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. Throughout the coming 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.

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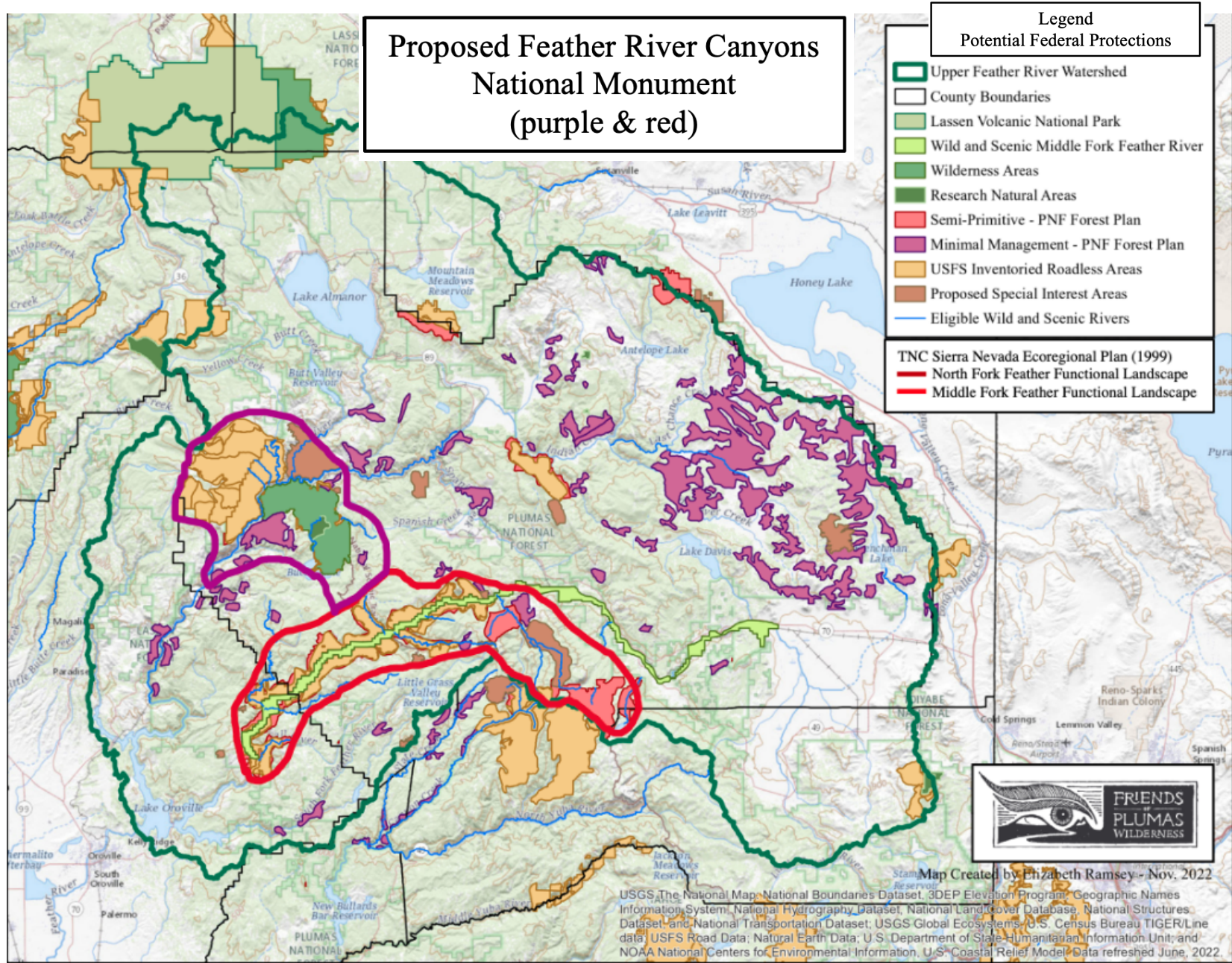
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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?

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. The Statue of Liberty and Admiralty Island are national monuments.

Process of Designation and

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.

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

How does the 1906 Antiquities Act work in 2022?

- **These are special places with tremendous value but these forest ecosystems and adjacent communities are most under threat from 21st century change. How will 20th century land designation policy address 21st century challenges? Ex: Sequoia NM as designated in 2000 and most recent science indicates this has done little to prevent forest loss.**

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 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. For example, the proposal for Bears Ears National Monument (2016) was submitted by five Native American Tribes and will be co-managed by an inter-Tribal coalition and federal land managers. There are currently several national monument campaigns led by Tribes who were inspired by Bears Ears. Who might seek national monument designations in the future? Where and what might they wish to protect?

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

In simple terms, the way the process works is this: 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.

Monument coalition members will heed lessons learned from studies of the devastating fires of 2020 and 2021 in Giant Sequoia National Monument (GSNM) and Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park. We will also look at the GSNM proclamation (2000), monument management plan (2012), Sequoia National Forest Plan (1988), and Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park general management plan (2004) to see how forest management has evolved over the last decades. The GSNM management plan is the newest approved plan and permits all fuels reduction treatments available (prescribed fire, managed wildfire,

hand thinning, and mechanical thinning), except for the use of mechanical thinning in Wilderness. To what extent were these fuels reduction tools employed in GSNM between 2012 when the plan was completed and 2020, when lightning caused fires in Sequoia National Park and GSNM killed 10-14% of all existing Sequoia's over four feet in diameter? After a century of logging and fire suppression, it is doubtful that the structure of forests and function of fire would have been restored in less than a decade.

How big is the proposed monument?

- **What is the proposed area of this monument?**

The proposed National 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?

- **What threats does the National Monument aim to protect against?**

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 of the Maidu who have inhabited this region for generations, which offers critical insights into the historic and scientific significance of the area and is a resource to be protected and used in understanding and managing this landscape sustainably for generations to come.

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

- **What specific area would be designated as a national monument?**
- **Why should the upper Feather River watershed be a National Monument? What are its unique or outstanding assets? (Consider the context of recent fires).**

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.

Our coalition's national monument proposal focuses on the conservation of wild watersheds where the Feather River cuts through the Sierra Crest. The map on page 5 shows the general area we are evaluating for our proposal in heavy red and purple lines. Where the monument boundary ultimately ends up depends on local input and other considerations like cultural landscapes of interest to Tribes; watershed boundaries, landforms and 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 Feather River is the present and ancestral home of Maidu Indians. The mountains, canyons, rivers, streams and springs in the proposed monument have special cultural value to the Maidu because of their long relationship with the land. The proposed 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. Recognition of cultural genocide and returning Maidu Traditional Knowledge to their historic homeland can help heal injustices of the past and restore cultural and natural landscapes. 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 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 and ghost towns. Although most of the miners' buildings have been lost over time, many of their artifacts remain, and trails they built are still used today. Unique voices such as Louise Amelia Clapp, a.k.a. Dame Shirley, are also present. The sport of skiing was introduced to the Americas in the northern Sierra Nevada by Norwegian miners. Within the proposed 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. Subsequent to monument designation, coalition members envision creating a forest and fire management plan for the rugged and remote portions of the watershed that is guided by Indigenous knowledge and best available forest research, with a focus on the long-term resilience of this unique natural treasure.

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 9 distinct ecoregions that is home to at least 75 animals that are species of concern, threatened, or endangered and 142 plant species that are rare, threatened, endangered, or of limited distribution. 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. While salmon and the California grizzly bear are no longer present here, in their ancestral home ranges, the gray wolf has made a return to our area, demonstrating its vitality and importance to numerous families of life.

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; and unique geologic features like Little Volcano (limestone), Marble Cone, and Red Hill (the largest serpentine 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 proposed 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 proposed 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 proposed monument, including 14 miles within

the Bucks Lake Wilderness. Feather Falls and Hartman Bar are National Recreation Trails within the proposed monument.

Thirty more hiking trails and a half-dozen routes allow visitors to explore deep into the remote canyons of the proposed 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, snow-shoe, ski, and snowmobile in the proposed monument. The Lost Sierra Traverse, a twenty-five mile multi-day ski tour between the historic mining towns of Johnsville and Onion Valley, is located on the south-eastern boundary of the proposed monument. Local resorts, restaurants, and retail businesses will likely benefit from increased visitation to the region with the establishment of the proposed 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?

- **What specific area of the Middle Fork is FoPW considering to place under a monument? The Middle Fork is already protected. Why would it need more protection?**

The area of the Middle Fork Feather River to be included in Feather River Canyons National Monument is yet to be determined. American Whitewater, a monument coalition member, desires to protect more than 150 miles of Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers within the monument. Given the current political situation, permanent protection of rivers under the Antiquities Act is much more likely than Congressional designation under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

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; large-scale mining, road-building, and commercial logging are all possible in the future. Tributaries to the Middle Fork of the Feather River proposed to be protected in Feather River Canyons National Monument include: Frazier, Jamison, Little Jamison, Dixon, Nelson, West Branch Nelson, East Branch Nelson, Onion Valley, Bear Creek, Little North Fork, South Branch Middle Fork, and Fall River.

In the 1950s, the Bureau of Reclamation proposed to dam the Green and Yampa Rivers in Dinosaur National Monument. Conservationists successfully defeated the attempt to put a dam in the national monument. Including 150 miles of Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers in Feather River Canyons National Monument will keep them free-flowing and protect their watersheds.

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TRIBES

How will Tribes be involved and sovereignty respected?

First and foremost, we respect the sovereignty of the Maidu. We have worked on Land Back efforts and will continue to partner with the Tribes. The resolution should delineate traditional areas of occupation and overlap as well as which Tribe is responsible for tending which areas. Because the national monument is on federal land (US Forest Service), Professor Charles Wilkinson informed us that federally recognized Tribes would negotiate with the Forest Service to determine what would and would not be allowed within the proposed monument. We will advocate that all Tribes, federally and non-federally recognized, be at the table when the national monument plan is written.

We see the designation of a national monument in the Feather River region as an opportunity to expand the use of Traditional Knowledge and practices on federal lands. We strongly feel federal lands could be better tended with Indigenous stewardship. Indigenous co-management, as seen at Bears Ears National Monument, is an example of what we are working toward. We see the designation of a national monument as an opportunity for local Tribes to expand the use of traditional practices to restore watersheds and wildlife habitat.

Collaborative Management - how does it work?

- **What does collaborative management look like?**
- **Will the tribal community have a substantial role? I.e. land management and preservation of sacred sites. “If the tribe is in favor of the monument, I would be in favor.”**

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.

In terms of implementation, 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.

To date, Lethi Watson, Tribal Liaison for Friends of Plumas Wilderness, has met with three Tribes in the area to formally present the Feather River Canyons National Monument proposal and seek input. Greenville Indian Rancheria has provided a letter of support. A Tribal Leader Gathering was held at Tobin Resort on November 15, 2022 with five federally-recognized Tribes, two non-recognized Tribes, and two Tribal organizations (18 Tribal representatives total). Regular and meaningful Tribal engagement is central to the national monument effort, and a collaborative management outcome, with Tribal guidance, would be ideal.

What about non-federally recognized Tribes?

- **Can non-federally recognized Tribes have equal standing?**

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 effectively voice their concerns.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & PROCESS

Is there a formal process for public involvement?

- **What does formal public comment look like for the creation of a NM?**

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?

- **How do you avoid a 'Bears Ears' situation with the creation of a new NM?**

If a national monument has strong local support, it would be highly unlikely that a future president would reduce the size of it. Bears Ears and Grand Staircase national monuments were dramatically reduced in size by former President Trump at the request of Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, who was adamantly opposed to the designation of these monuments. President Biden restored Grand Staircase Escalante and enlarged Bears Ears, reinstating the legacies of Presidents Clinton and Obama.

What is the timeline?

- **When would be a good time to start promoting the NM idea? Is there a good time? Is an occasion like this [the 11/15/2022 event] a good time?? Would having people sign a list saying they support a NM idea be a good thing to do?**

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

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!

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

- **Is input still being accepted? I have the feeling that FoPW has 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 Tribes (Berry Creek Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, Greenville Rancheria, Konkow Valley Band, Mooretown Rancheria, Taylorsville Rancheria, and Maidu Summit Consortium), [working groups](#) on a range of topics³, and reaching out to the general public as well.

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?

I didn't know about this until recently. What has been the public process to date? It seems like FoPW needs to be more transparent.

On November 7th, 2018, the Friends of Plumas Wilderness film "Visions of the Lost Sierra" had its debut at Quincy's Town Hall Theatre; over 200 people attended this open event, which was well-promoted in *Plumas News* and on social media. Dick Laursen was awarded the "Wilbur Vaughan Wild Visionary" award, and in his acceptance speech he rolled out the idea of making the Middle Fork a National Monument. This was the first time the idea of a national monument in our region was suggested.

Since then, Friends of Plumas Wilderness has been developing the concept of a national monument. Protection of the Middle Fork was discussed at the Feather River College Spring Sustainability Symposium on February 12, 2019 at the West End Theater.

³ Cultural Landscapes; Forest, Fire, Free-Flowing Rivers; Critical Habitats; Education & Science; Community & Economy; Tourism & Recreation

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. Examples of public meetings: Plumas Audubon Society at the Quincy Library meeting room on March 5, 2022 and Plumas County Supervisors on March 15, 2022.

A public opinion survey was conducted between March 1 and July 6, 2022 with 380 people responding.

On June 8, 2022, a piece about the Antiquities Act, and on July 16, 2022 a call for preservation in the Upper Feather River watershed were published in the "Where I Stand" section of *Plumas News* and other regional papers.

In the late summer and early fall of 2022, the 'Field Trips with Friends' series was launched to provide an opportunity to explore some of the most beautiful corners of the Plumas National Forest with top experts from the U.S. Forest Service, Feather River College, and other organizations. Over 80 people attended the four field trips.

On Tuesday, November 15, Friends of Plumas Wilderness met with 18 Tribal leaders from five federally recognized Tribes, two non-recognized Tribes, and two other Tribal organizations at the Tobin Resort. On Wednesday, November 16, Friends of Plumas Wilderness hosted an event at Quincy's West End Theater titled "Is a National Monument Right for Plumas?" Over 100 community members attended the event..

All these events were well publicized in *Plumas News*, on social media, and through other channels. 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'?

- **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.

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FOREST HEALTH & MANAGEMENT

Does national monument designation allow forest health work?

- **How would Monument status facilitate or limit fuels reduction and prescribed burning?**

We understand the need to reduce fuels and use prescribed fire across the watershed. Our board president has personally worked to reduce forest fuels for over a decade at Feather River College and on Feather River Land Trust lands, bringing in over half a million dollars to Plumas County for fuels reduction work.

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 3 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?

- **What does national monument designation mean when a wildfire starts? Does it impact firefighters' ability to respond?**

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

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

- **Will motorized recreation (OHV, OSV, Motorcycles, etc) be limited by the designation of a National Monument?**

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 monument boundaries would be determined by the management plan. For example, if there were areas of particular importance for specific motorized uses, those areas should be identified by participants in the Recreation Working Group of the Feather River Canyons National Monument Coalition. The Recreation Working Group's aim is to include a diverse range of recreationists' perspectives in order to identify the recreational values and locations of interest within the proposed monument.

The management plan will include provisions to continue to authorize recreational use such as hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, camping, boating, horseback riding, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle riding, and over-snow vehicle riding as long as such use is consistent with the protection of objects and values the proposed monument aims to preserve. Motorized vehicle use is permitted only on designated roads and trails, except if needed for administrative purposes or to respond to an emergency.

Will national monument designation lead to overcrowding?

- **I'm worried about this attracting lots of new people to the area, and I like it the way it is. Will my local trails, camps, and swimming holes be impacted?**

The Feather River Region is being promoted and we are being discovered. An initial analysis by a Friends of Plumas Wilderness contractor of three local businesses and seven

local organizations revealed nearly 25,000 Instagram followers and nearly 20,000 Facebook followers.

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 without direct public involvement.

Will there be an entrance fee?

- **Does it cost money to visit a national monument?**

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 monument if desired by the community.

Are pets allowed?

- **Can I bring my dog?**

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

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IMPACTS ON US FOREST SERVICE & COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

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

- **What is the benefit of pursuing National Monument status over advocating for forest plan updates?**

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. The Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan ("Forest Plan") was published in 1988 and US Forest Service Region 5 planning timelines indicate an update is unlikely to begin until forests to the south and west of us have completed their plan updates. Right now, the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests are undergoing forest plan updates, a process that started in 2014 and is hopefully nearing completion, after nearly a decade.

Bottom line, 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?

- **How does National Monument designation affect existing land ownership?**

Nothing in the establishment of the national monument shall affect any property rights, any trust lands held by the State of California, any political subdivision of the State of California, any special district, or any private property rights within the boundaries of the national monument. Establishment of the national monument shall not grant the Secretary of Agriculture any new authority on or over non-Federal lands not already provided by law. The authority of the Secretary of Agriculture under this Act extends only to Federal lands and Federal interests in lands included in the national monument.

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

- **Would monument status involve development of infrastructure such as roadways and visitor center? What about maintenance of existing infrastructure?**

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 visitors centers. Conservation groups associated with national monuments can help fund maintenance and development.

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

- **What would be put in place for staffing and who would be the law enforcement responsible for this area?**

Existing law enforcement jurisdictions would remain as they are today. The monument management plan could address staffing and law enforcement needs. National monument designation could be used as a reason for Plumas and Butte County Commissioners to request additional funding from state and federal governments.

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

- **Is the local land manager expected to manage the NM with existing budget allocations? What support funding is attached to a NM designation?**

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.

A national monument could be just the thing we need to inspire local residents, who have endured the deadliest, costliest, and largest single wildfire, and bring us together to restore our communities, working lands, and wildlands.

Can livestock grazing occur within the national monument?

- **How is grazing affected by the Designation of a National Monument?**

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

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

- **How would national monument status affect land management activities such as timber management relative to current management of the national forest?**

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.

Because it was not cost effective to log most areas where the monument is proposed, the largest trees on our public lands are found here. Although these forests were not cut, their structure and composition have been dramatically altered due to over a century of fire suppression. Where practical, these forests need to be thinned, using all tools available. Prescribed fire and cultural burning need to be greatly expanded and used on a regular basis. National monument designation could help secure funding from foundations, grants, and donors to do this much needed work.

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

- **What additional protection would “National Monument” designation provide that isn't already afforded by Forest Service protection/management?**

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. The Conservation Lands Foundation ranks our local public lands among the top 5% of all Forest Service and BLM lands in the lower 48 states for their conservation value.

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.

The 1988 Plumas National Forest plan was written during the peak of the logging boom and puts a priority on growing, and logging, the maximum number of trees per acre. In order to survive increasing wildfire intensity, future forests will need to be more diverse and have far fewer trees per acre. National monument designation would mandate a new plan be written for the area that would emphasize land-based solutions to the climate crisis.

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ECONOMICS & COMMUNITY

How does national monument designation affect local communities?

- **How will local communities benefit from the monument designation?**

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?

- **Will my private property be impacted?**

National monuments protect “existing rights,” including private property rights. Depending on the specific boundary of the proposed national monument, 1 - 2% of the total acres are owned by private individuals, and 2 - 8% are corporately owned. 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?

- **How will the Monument affect other regional/area initiatives like Connected Communities?**

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?

- **What if this national monument turns into a national park someday? This happened to Joshua Tree, and impacted the quality of life for local residents significantly.**

Of the 63 national parks, 27 of them started out as national monuments. The designation of a national park requires an act of Congress. Our most recent national parks:

1. New River Gorge (WV) 2020
2. White Sands (NM) 2019 (formerly a national monument)
3. Indiana Dunes (IN) 2019
4. Gateway Arch (MO) 2018
5. Pinnacles (CA) 2013 (formerly a national monument)
6. Great Sand Dunes (CO) 2004 (formerly a national monument)
7. Congaree (SC) 2003
8. Cuyahoga Valley (OH) 2000
9. Black Canyon of the Gunnison (CO) 1999 (formerly a national monument)
10. Death Valley (CA) 1994 (formerly a national monument)
11. Joshua Tree (CA) 1994 (formerly a national monument)

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 two hours away) and the COVID pandemic likely influenced this increase in visitation. Additional factors include the popularization of the outdoor lifestyle, specifically rock climbing, coupled with increased opportunities for remote professional work. Joshua Tree National Park also represents a geographic area with tremendous ease of access. The proposed monument on the Plumas features large swaths of difficult-to-access terrain.

Won't this lead to 'loving the area to death?'

- **How does drawing attention to an area and inviting more human traffic equate to conservation efforts?**

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. By creating a management plan that anticipates and accommodates increasing numbers of tourists, provides zoning of areas to be promoted and to be protected, monitors use and impacts, and provides limits, we will make much more informed land management decisions.

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

FUNDING

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

- **What are the provisions for funding to implement a collaborative management plan for a national monument?**
- **Does the affected agency receive extra resources to complete the plan? (Congress controls budget). Would love to see native burning practices put into an implementable plan.**

Forest Service funds allocated through Congress are not the only source for the implementation of a 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 an estimated \$1.648 billion allocated in the 2022 budget (if you combine 30x30 funding with wildlife corridor funding). There is another \$71 million for planning, science, and capacity building and another \$749.4 million for climate smart lands. 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. Suppression of the Dixie Fire cost \$637.4 million (not including losses or insurance): it burned nearly one million acres, making it the largest and most expensive wildfire to contain in state history. Over the 15 weeks it took to contain, it cost over \$6 million / day.

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

- **What do you think may happen re: Presidential Authority to decrease monument size as Trump did? Is the Antiquities Act threatened if “Trumpism” returns?**

Since the Antiquities Act passed in 1906, 16 presidents - from Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Biden - have used their authority to designate national monuments. Only three presidents did not use the Act: Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Several Supreme Court cases have upheld the president's authority to proclaim large areas under the act.

In 2017 the Trump administration conducted a review of 27 major designations under the Antiquities Act and subsequently significantly reduced the size of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument, both in Utah. These actions were challenged in federal court, and President Biden restored the original areas in 2021. This was the only such instance in the 100+ years of the Antiquities Act's existence, and it was found illegal.

For an in-depth [analysis](#) of presidential authority under the Antiquities Act: Knowlden, Jesse. (2018). *The Presidential Authority to Reserve and Modify National Monuments Under the Antiquities Act*. University of Cincinnati Law Review (Vol 87, Issue 2).

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

- **Do you want to try to make more national monument[s]?**

Friends of Plumas Wilderness does not plan to advocate for the designation of more than one national monument in the Upper Feather River Watershed, but might consider it if Tribes and the local community desire it, and it makes conservation sense.

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. No public lands within the Upper Feather River Watershed have received permanent federal protections in over thirty years. Friends of Plumas Wilderness aims to permanently protect more public lands for nature-based solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises and the multitude of benefits they provide for us and generations to come.

There are four tools for protecting US Forest Service lands, which make up almost 65% of the 2.3-million-acre, 3,600 square mile Upper Feather River Watershed. Presently, there are 3

Wilderness Areas (56,393 acres), 1 Wild & Scenic River (77.6 miles; 19,000 acres), 3 Research Natural Areas (2099 acres), and no National Monuments in the UFRW.

When making decisions about what lands and waters Friends of Plumas Wilderness aims to protect, we followed these concepts and principles:

1. Watershed Approach
2. Biodiversity Emphasis
3. Preserve Special Designations
4. Core Areas are Key
5. Connectivity is Critical
6. Maintain Mature and Old Growth Forests
7. Identify Impending Threats

Our first priority is a campaign to designate the Feather River Canyons National Monument.

Wild & Scenic River designation is our second priority. A citizens' inventory of rivers is essential to provide recommendations for which eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers might be designated. Our goal is 100 miles of W&S Rivers in total.

Our third priority is the creation of more Research Natural Areas in the UFRW. Working with the USFS, FoPW aims to focus on mature and old-growth forests for RNA protection as they provide unique habitat and sequester significant amounts of carbon.

Wilderness designation is our fourth priority. FoPW supports Wilderness designation for lands recommended by the Lassen National Forest. We would consider advocating for other Wilderness areas if there is strong local support and a realistic political pathway, such as a Sierra-wide Wilderness bill.

Should we propose something more durable?

- **Does your proposal do enough to protect wilderness, especially given the ability of future presidential administrations influenced by interest group lobbying to undo this protection?**

Feather River Canyons National Monument would protect more lands and waters than Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River designations could in our region, would allow for much needed fuels reduction work, and address the needs and concerns of local communities. In short, a national monument is a better fit for our region than Wilderness.

Depending on the size of area local communities desire to be protected as a national monument, our region could be more in line with national or state averages of permanent protections. 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.

Designation of a national monument does not require an act of Congress as Wilderness does. It requires a Presidential Proclamation, which is much more likely and expedient, given the current political division of our federal government.

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.

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