

NATIONAL MONUMENTS:

A hunting and fishing perspective



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Cover photo: Josh Duplechian
Above left: Devin O'Dea

the world's best...

The foresight of early sporting-conservationists has allowed hunters and anglers to safeguard lands that otherwise would have been vulnerable to development. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law. Since its creation, a total of eighteen Presidents—nine Republicans and nine Democrats—have used the Act to set aside national treasures as monuments for the American people to enjoy. When created with the input of sportsmen and sportswomen, national monuments are an effective tool for protecting areas important to hunting and fishing. In fact, numerous monuments, spanning from Montana to New Mexico, are known for their world class sporting opportunities.

Unlike other land protection tools, national monuments are created through presidential proclamation, and this authority is checked by public opinion and the power of Congress to abolish or modify a monument. Congress also has the power to create monuments on its own.

To gain the support of hunters and anglers, it's critical that new monuments maintain hunting and fishing access and opportunities, and that wildlife and fisheries management remain with the states' experts, whose job is to manage big game herds and set seasons and bag limits. Sportsmen and sportswomen also want to see incompatible uses prevented on these landscapes, providing certainty for quality experiences outdoors.

While some monuments have fueled social and political controversy, many have not. It's important to remember that only existing federal public lands—

not state or private property—can be considered for monument status, and these protected lands are more valuable for their scenery, watersheds, fish and wildlife or historical significance than for industrial development. Monument designation is one of the great American conservation achievements, a concrete statement made by a nation and a people that honor history and natural beauty now and for generations to come.

In a gridlocked Congress where public land conservation is often not prioritized even when strong local and bipartisan support exists, the Antiquities Act offers a path forward, allowing citizens to ask their president to do what Congress has failed to accomplish. When used properly, the act has given us the opportunity to maintain some of the world's best public hunting and fishing by conserving large and vitally important landscapes that could have been lost or diminished without it.

Within this report, we lay out basic principles to address the needs of sportsmen and sportswomen that should be followed in the creation of new national monuments. We look at four monuments that were established years ago, and we recount stories of the land, people, jobs, wildlife and fisheries of these places. All of these stories carry a central theme: when created through a transparent public process in the right place, national monuments have the power to be a net gain for hunters, anglers and local communities.

8 principles

for gaining angler and hunter support for new national monuments

America’s national monuments not only enable long-term conservation of cultural sites and scientifically valuable resources, they also can conserve some of the best hunting and fishing in America. To accomplish this objective, monument designations must be pursued in a way that addresses the priorities and values of sportsmen and sportswomen.

Paramount in achieving this outcome is a process that is locally driven and transparent, incorporates science-based management, and ensures the conservation of important fish and wildlife habitat while upholding continued opportunities to hunt and fish within the boundaries of a proposed monument.





PRINCIPLES FOR NATIONAL MONUMENTS

The following principles must be followed to generate meaningful hunt-fish support for the creation and management of national monuments on public land:

- 1
Important fish and wildlife habitat must be conserved.
- 2
The monument proclamation must clearly stipulate that management authority over fish and wildlife populations will be retained by state fish and wildlife agencies.
- 3
Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service lands must remain under the authority and jurisdiction of these multiple-use focused land management agencies.
- 4
The monument proclamation must direct reasonable access for fishing, hunting, and wildlife management, including allowances for terrestrial habitat improvement and water developments.
- 5
The input and guidance of hunters and anglers must be included in management plans for national monuments.
- 6
The monument proposal must be developed through a public process—one that includes hunters and anglers, as well as appropriate state, Tribal, and local governments.
- 7
The monument proposal must gain support from local hunters and anglers.
- 8
Hunting and fishing opportunities must be upheld and the historical and cultural significance of our outdoor traditions explicitly acknowledged in the monument proclamation.

Browns Canyon National Monument



Photo: Curtis Collins

The Arkansas River is born of snowmelt in the highest Colorado Rockies. No stretch of the Arkansas is more spectacular, or more loved, than the wild whitewater of Browns Canyon in Chaffee County, Colorado. Upwards of 300,000 Americans come here every year to experience some of the world's most beautiful, hellraising rapids in a rugged and wildlife-rich canyon of pink granite, with the Sawatch Range towering to the west. But this is not just rollercoaster, adrenaline-junkie water. It's a Gold Medal trout river, one of the best public trout fisheries in the southern Rockies, with 20-inch browns mixed in with hard-muscled,

coldwater rainbows. On February 19, 2015, 21,586 acres of this country were designated Browns Canyon National Monument. Widely supported by hunters and anglers, the monument consists of 9,750 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management and 11,836 acres of the San Isabel National Forest. The Arkansas River runs along and through the western edge of the monument, conserved for the American public to access and enjoy in perpetuity.



Photo: Josh Duplechian



BROWNS CANYON

NATIONAL MONUMENT

Chaffee County, Colorado
21,586 Acres Established in 2015

HUNTING



Elk
Mule Deer
Bighorn Sheep

FISHING

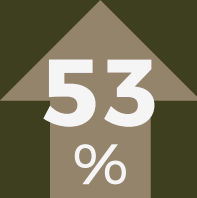


Brown Trout
Rainbow Trout

MONUMENT ECONOMICS



From 2000 to 2020, the population of Chaffee County increased by 22 percent.



From 2000 to 2020, service sector jobs increased by 53 percent.



From 2000 to 2020, jobs in travel and tourism including hunting and fishing have increased by 41 percent.



Photo courtesy Greg Felt

Greg Felt

Owner of Ark Anglers

Chaffee County Commissioner

In the changing West, the board of county commissioners in Chaffee County, Colorado, is an unusual one. All three of the commissioners have deep ties to the Arkansas River and its famous whitewater rafting, stunning beauty and noted trout fishing. One owns a whiskey distilling business and is a former rafting guide. Another owns an outdoor retail store. And the third has the deepest ties of them all; Greg Felt runs Ark Anglers, a thriving outfitting business that operates in Browns Canyon National Monument on the

Arkansas as well as in the mountains outside the towns of Buena Vista and Salida.

Felt came to the area years ago as a guide on the river until he was able to break out on his own with Ark Anglers. For many years, people in the region wanted to protect the stunning canyon that is Browns Canyon for future generations to enjoy. The canyon had been a wilderness study area for many years, but “you can’t keep it a wilderness study area forever,” said Felt.

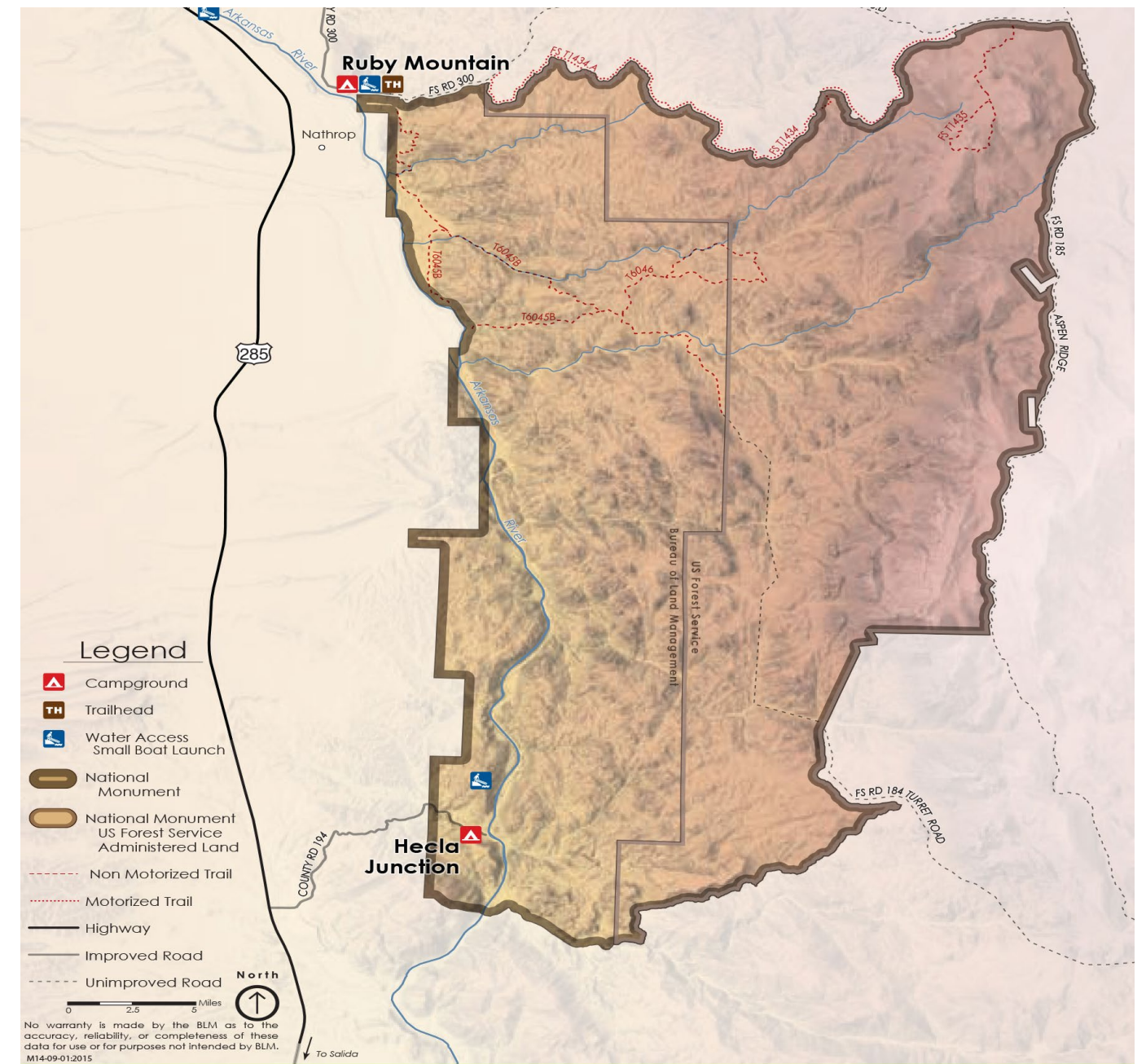
More than a decade ago, folks started talking about protecting the canyon as national monument. “I felt that we really had good stakeholder engagement when it was being talked about, and a monument was just a really stable way of protecting the terrain. At the end, they did a really good job of incorporating all the input, and in many ways, the net result was it was kept unchanged.”

Today, the Arkansas River is one of the most popular whitewater destinations in the world, with raft and kayak enthusiasts coming to the river from around the globe. Monument designation equates to lasting conservation of the river, as well as to Ark Angler’s business, said Felt.

The fishing on the river has taken off as well, with wild browns and some rainbows thriving in the river whose headwaters once suffered from acid mine run off at one of the most infamous Super Fund sites in the country at Leadville. But now the river has been

cleaned up and the fishing—and the bug life—is noteworthy, said Felt. The river is known for its diverse entomology that translates to good fishing during caddis and mayfly hatches, as well as some stoneflies.

“The great thing about the monument designation is that it protects the whole river corridor,” said Felt, who noted that the board of commissioners is having conversations about proposed rail traffic along the river and its implications on the thriving outdoor industry in the region. “We protected that river with the monument and that designation adds a layer of protection that we need to consider.”



Organ Mountains- Desert Peaks National Monument



Photo: Emma Savely

In 1682, Spanish explorers in southern New Mexico named the Organ Mountains because they thought the towering spires resembled the pipes of a church organ. Just under 9,000 feet high, the mountains are lost in the sky and have a completely different climate than the raw desert below.

Five mountain ranges are in the 496,330-acre Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument: the Robledo, Sierra de las Uvas, Doña Ana, Organ and Potrillo mountains. Below and around them, the Chihuahua desert yawns, sere grasslands intersperse with the stark spikes of sotol against the white sky, ocotillo bloom in otherworldly colors. The mountains and their deep and shadowed canyons hold forests of oak and juniper and Mexican buckeye, nourished

by the rains and snows that catch here in the heights. The springs and seeps that issue from the rocks create habitat for more than 30 species of ferns, just one part of the incredible diversity of life that makes the Organ Mountains famous. For the hunter, there are mule deer, mountain lion, javelina, three species of quail and even waterfowl in the wet years.



Photo courtesy: Bob Wick, BLM



ORGAN MOUNTAINS- DESERT PEAKS

NATIONAL MONUMENT

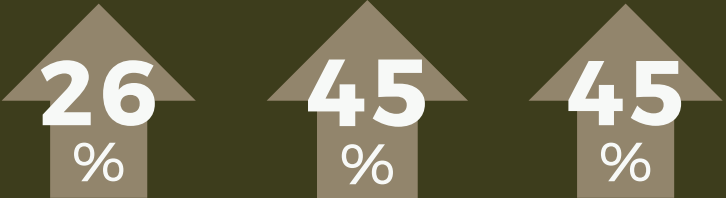
Dona Ana County, New Mexico
496,330 Acres Established in 2014

HUNTING



- Desert Bighorn Sheep
- Mearns Quail
- Gambel Quail
- Blue Quail
- Mule Deer
- Pronghorn

MONUMENT ECONOMICS



From 2000 to 2020, the population of Dona Ana County increased by 26 percent.

From 2000 to 2020, service sector jobs increased by 45 percent.

From 2000 to 2020, jobs in travel and tourism including hunting and fishing have increased by 45 percent.



Photo courtesy John Cornell

John Cornell

Sportsman

Hillsboro, New Mexico

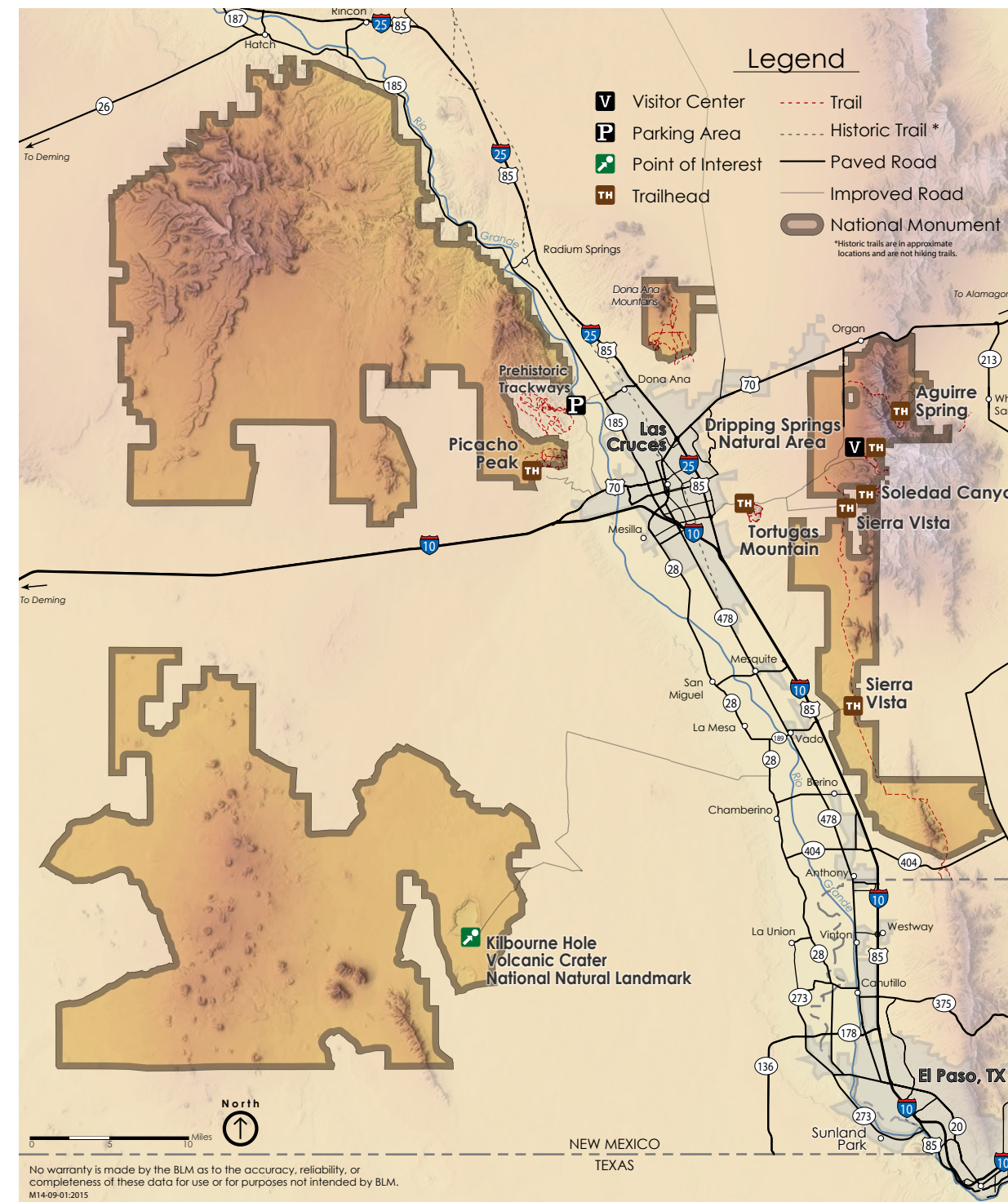
“I’ve got friends from Las Cruces who have been hunting these lands for 50 years and more,” said Cornell. “We hunt the monument for mule deer, and on the years we get rain, there’s great quail hunting – for all three species: Gambel’s, Mearns and scaled, and when there’s water in the playas we are in the ducks and doves.

“The proclamation states specifically that recreation and other traditional uses will continue. That’s what sportsmen here and so many other people supported and worked for. With the kind of Congress and the kind of polarization we have now, there’s not a chance that this protection would have ever come through legislation. Monument status fits this place perfectly.

We have BLM management, a multiple-use agency; we have wilderness study areas inside it; we have lands that aren’t wilderness, with plenty of existing access that will be maintained. We’ve successfully protected the best of our public lands and done it without restricting any of the uses we need to keep.

“This monument is so close to the second largest city in New Mexico [Las Cruces]. People of all walks of life will have the chance to see and know some of

the best of New Mexico. I’m especially proud of the role sportsmen and sportswomen played in this. We were the key players, the more conservative side of the effort, and that helped to bridge the gaps between the various conservation groups and people who might otherwise oppose the monument. Everybody from here to D.C. listened to hunters on this one, and we got it right.”



Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument



Photo: Kelly Engen

Big game hunters are accustomed to seeking the high country. In the Breaks, this is reversed for you go down into the hunting country, leaving the high sagebrush plains and descending into some of the most complex coulee systems on the planet. This land of breaks and badlands is ponderosa pine and juniper country, a hidden world of deeply incised canyons, white cliffs and rich meadows falling away to the wide floodplain and cottonwood bottoms of the mighty Missouri River. Big mule deer live here in rugged isolation, as well as some of the world's most impressive bighorn rams. For the bird hunter willing to tackle tough country, the sharptail grouse hunting can be superb. And without doubt or argument, it offers some of the best publicly accessible trophy elk hunting in the world.

The 149 miles of Wild and Scenic River is a floater's dream in summer. During a slow-motion voyage into the heart of the monument, adventurers camp on the trails and crossings used by Lewis and Clark and Native American hunting parties, and explore ghostly abandoned homesteads, outlaw hideouts and bizarre rock formations on the skyline. In the days of the Wild West, you kept your wits about you in the Breaks. That has not changed.



Photo courtesy: Bob Wick, BLM



UPPER MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS

NATIONAL MONUMENT

Blaine, Phillips, Fergus and Chouteau, Montana
377,000 Acres Established in 2001

HUNTING



Bighorn Sheep
Elk
Mule Deer
Pronghorn
Whitetail Deer

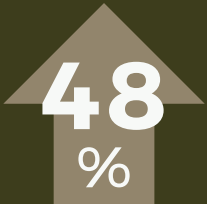
FISHING



Sharptail Grouse
Grey Partridge
Pheasant

Walleye
Sauger
Channel Catfish

MONUMENT ECONOMICS



From 2000 to 2010,
residential
development
increased by 48
percent.



From 2000 to 2020,
service sector jobs
increased by 45
percent.



Photo courtesy Nicolle Fugere

Nicolle Fugere

Business Owner Missouri River Outfitters

Nicolle Fugere likes to think that Montana’s Missouri River was at the heart of her upbringing. “I kind of feel like the Missouri helped raise me,” said Fugere. “I started guiding here when I was 19, and when I was 27, I bought the company.” Now in her 30s, Fugere is the owner and operator of Missouri River Outfitters, a thriving family business whose core is in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Founded in 1965, the company is based out of Fort Benton, a famously historic town—once the heart of the fur trade and the state’s oldest continually occupied community. Fort Benton is located on the banks of the river in north-central Montana upstream of the stretch of river simply called “The Breaks.” It’s here that Fugere

lives and works and the river supports her family. For Fugere, “family” means not only her mother who is the bookkeeper for the business, but her long-term trusted employees who help guide as many as 30 river trips every year.

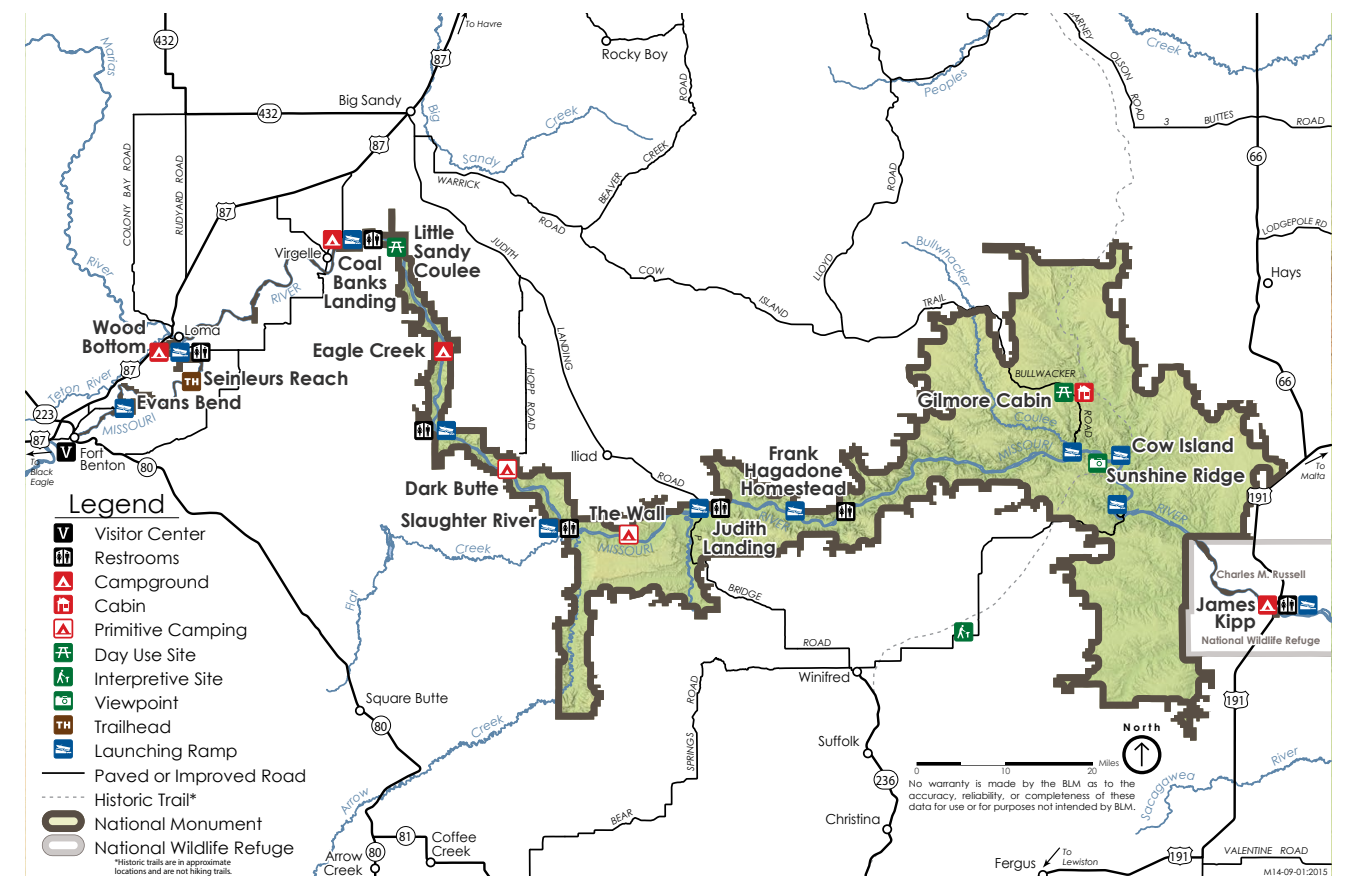
Missouri River Outfitters offers all kinds of options for people wanting to explore this wild place of deep history, from multi-day guided camping and canoeing adventures, to rentals, to shuttles for those floating on their own down the Missouri as it winds its way through the national monument.

Pivotal to the long-term success of her business is the national monument, which greatly boosted the tourism in 2001 when President Bill Clinton protected the area. The status of the river as a national monument was upheld in 2017 when the Trump Administration reviewed its status and discovered overwhelming support for keeping the river and the land protected.

“We have clients who come here because it is a

national monument,” said Fugere. “They love learning about it, about the history. History is a big part of our business and something we talk about as part of this company.”

It is hard to over-exaggerate the sense of wild isolation that comes to the visitor and the resident alike here. Overhead is a sky that is seldom sliced by air traffic while the river quietly winds its way through stunning white cliffs, past river-side benches of old growth cottonwood trees. Guests with Missouri River Outfitters dine on local food—like produce from the region and beef from nearby ranches. They sleep out in Springbar wall tents and float in craft powered only by muscle and the river itself. In the spring and summer, some fish for walleye, sauger, catfish and paddlefish. In the fall, there is hunting for big and upland game alike. This is the kind of place that thrives from being a national monument, said Fugere. “Eastern Montana needs more tourism. We need people to get out and explore this part of the state and support communities like Fort Benton.”



Rio Grande del Norte National Monument



Photo: Josh Duplechian

To hunt pronghorn in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is to follow in the footsteps of the ancients. The art of long-ago hunters is etched in the mahogany-colored basalt — strange motifs of lizards, snakes, an eclipsed sun, men in battle with their bows, a winged creature that may or may not have existed outside some fevered dream.

The rock art is a chronicle of wanderers here on the Taos plain, from the Clovis people who butchered mammoths with supersized stone axes to the Comanche who claimed this country as part of their empire.

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was

created on March 25, 2013. The monument, one of the nation's largest, lies in Taos and Rio Arriba counties, New Mexico, and comprises 242,455 acres of wild public lands backcountry hunting and fishing. New Mexico Game Unit 50 spans the monument, with strong herds of elk (the plain is situated at about 7,000 feet and is a critical winter range and a calving area), mule deer, pronghorn, black bear and, in the heights and along the ragged cliffs of the gorge, bighorn sheep. The Rio Grande here is one of the West's premier whitewater rivers and the entire river is a fantastic trout fishery with browns, rainbows and Rio Grande cutthroat.



Photo: Josh Duplechian



RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE

NATIONAL MONUMENT

Taos County, New Mexico
242,555 Acres Established in 2013

HUNTING



Elk
Mule Deer
Pronghorn
Bighorn Sheep

FISHING



Brown Trout
Rainbow Trout
Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout

MONUMENT ECONOMICS



From 2000 to 2020, the population of Taos County increased by 15 percent.



From 2000 to 2020, service sector jobs increased by five percent.



From 2000 to 2020, jobs in travel and tourism including hunting and fishing have increased by 27 percent.



Photo courtesy Gregg Flores

Gregg Flores

Cinematographer

Where the River Runs Outdoor Adventure Stories

New Mexico

Hunting and fishing and story and family. These are some of the pillars upon which Gregg Flores has built his life as a New Mexican. Throw in a little work too: Flores has had a remarkable career as a mechanical engineer for space-bound systems with Sandia Labs in Albuquerque, as well as a noted career as a cinematographer for his own company, Where the River Runs Outdoor Adventure Stories.

As a multi-generation New Mexican, Flores knew the land and the spectacular canyon of the Rio Grande River that is now the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument long before it was a monument. In fact, his maternal grandmother grew up in Dixon, not far from the monument. When the region was

under consideration for designation, Flores and many others were in full support. In the decade since it was designated a national monument, Flores has seen nothing but good come to the area because it is protected.

“It has been good for the area because it’s brought some more attention here,” said Flores. “People want to visit and see what it’s about. It is a destination within New Mexico as well as bringing a lot of tourism and

money to the area from outside the state.”

When he’s not working at Sandia Labs, Flores can be found fishing and hunting and camping with his family, as well as out on the monument filming. “A lot of my work has had a focus on the national monument and it’s really good that it’s protected. There have been folks coming here saying, ‘Let’s kayak, let’s fish, let’s go hunting’ and that has been really a powerful testament to the creation of the national monument and made

the area just a great hunting and fishing hub in the state.”

The beauty of the canyon, but also the sagebrush steppe at its rim has been a perfect setting for filming, said Flores. Down in the canyon, Flores has spent days on end filming people fly fishing, exploring and adventuring. Many of the stories of his films have a strong conservation theme; indeed his very first film featured the legendary writer Dutch Salmon of Silver City, New Mexico, and his effort to protect the Gila River in the southern part of the state. Since that time, Where the River Runs has told stories of the rich and diverse cultures in New Mexico, fly fishing adventures in the Rio Grand Gorge and hunting stories up on the rim. The monument designation protected this area and these stories, said Flores.

“I can think of nothing but good that has come out of the designation,” he said.

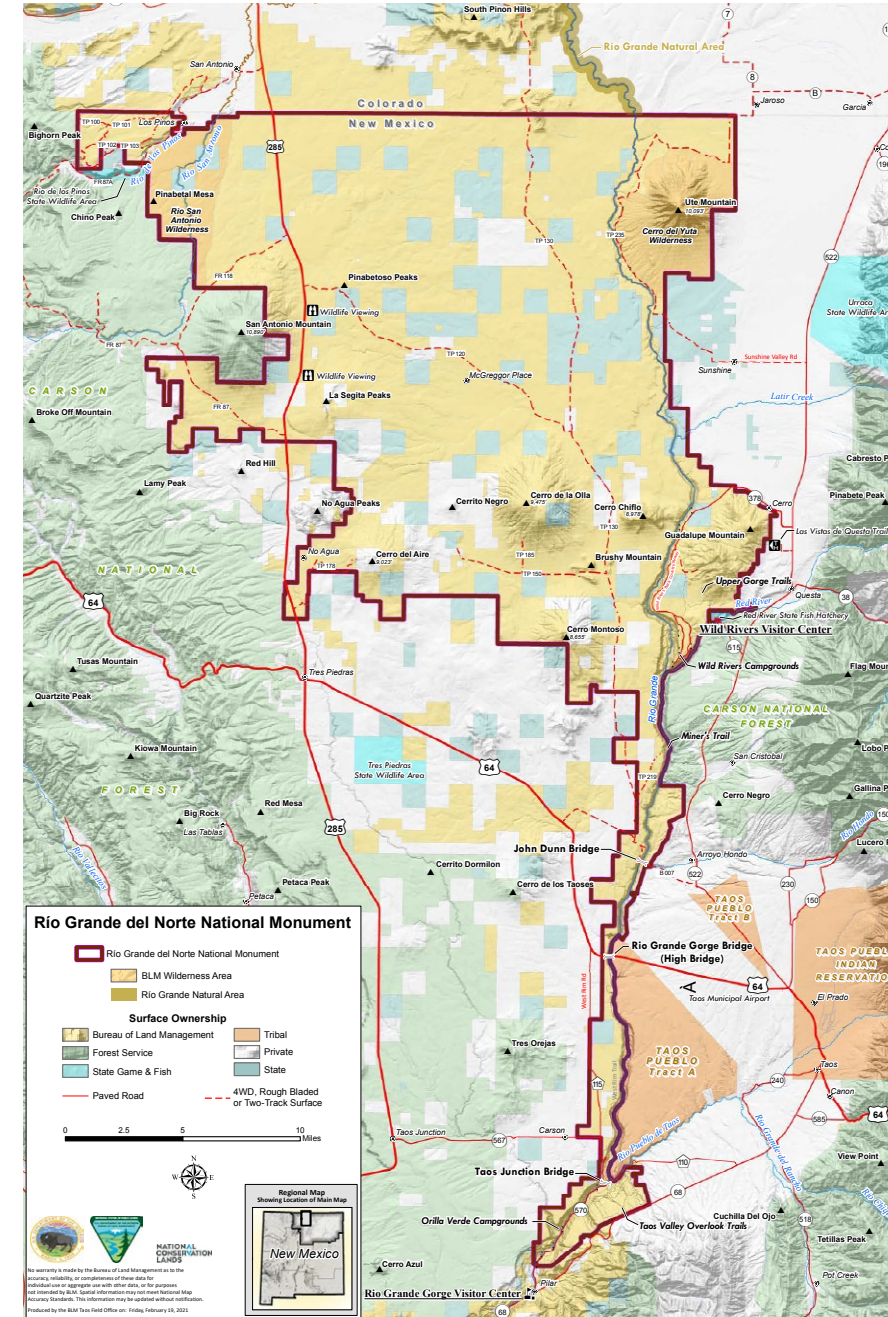




Photo: Tom Reed



Photo: Brian Barnett, BLM

Habitat Improvements within National Monuments

From developing water tanks to mowing decadent sagebrush

One issue commonly raised by state agencies and the hunting-fishing community is the need to conduct habitat improvements within national monuments to maintain, restore, and grow fish and wildlife populations, especially big game. This active management is particularly important in arid environments where limited water availability is often the driving factor of wildlife populations, and in turn, hunting opportunities. Fortunately, advocacy from hunting groups and state agencies has ensured habitat improvement - including water catchment projects - remains a management strategy in some national monuments.

First, the most recent national monuments include language in their proclamations providing certainty for wildlife management and habitat improvement. The Avi Kwa Ame National Monument proclamation, for example, was signed in 2023 and specifies that the federal agencies shall provide appropriate access for hunting and wildlife management. This includes providing allowances for the continuation and

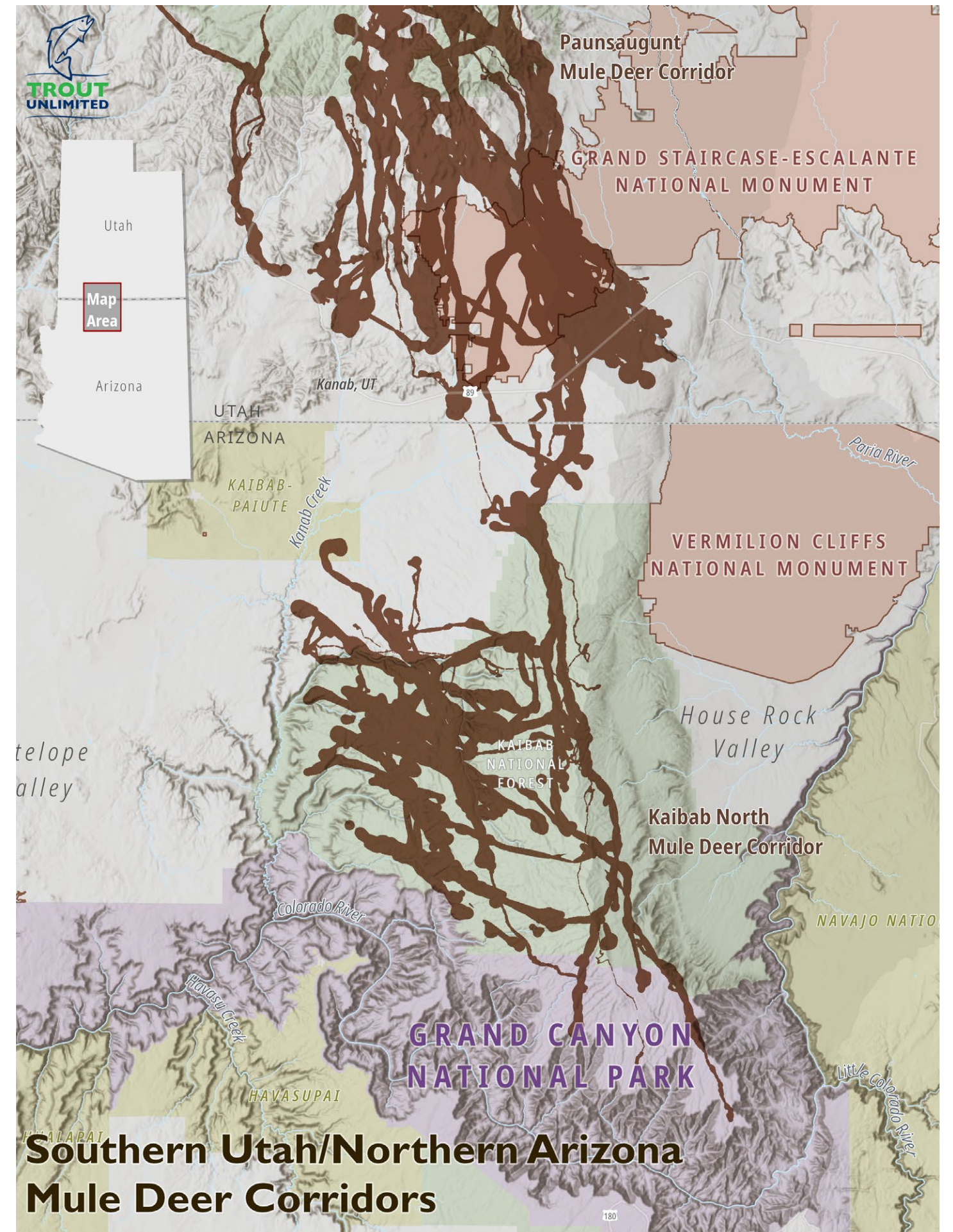




Photo: Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument



Photo: Utah Division Wildlife Resources

expansion of wildlife water developments, and directs the Secretary of the Interior to create a memorandum of understanding with the state wildlife agency in Nevada.

And while clear direction for these priorities is important, the hunt-fish community is most interested in seeing actual habitat work being completed. One of the best instances of this boots-on-the-ground work is underway in Utah, where the state has been working with the Bureau of Land Management to improve habitat for the famed Paunsaugunt mule deer herd (see Southern Utah/Northern Arizona Mule Deer Corridors map, page 31). These 5,000 animals provide Utah residents and visitors alike a chance to hunt trophy mule deer in a stunning western landscape.

Since 1996, much of the habitat for the Paunsaugunt deer herd can be found within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. While this monument has not been free of controversy, extensive work to improve habitat has been completed on the monument thanks to strong working relationships between the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Land Management.

The many projects completed jointly by state and federal agencies include controlling invasive species, rehabilitating areas burned by wildfire, constructing and repairing wildlife water developments, chaining invasive juniper and harrowing decadent stands of vegetation, mulching, broadcast seeding and building roadway fencing to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. All of these projects are designed to help wildlife, particularly mule deer, which are crucially important for Utah hunters.

“There has been major habitat restoration and water developments across the Paunsaugunt unit in the last ten years,” said Curtis Roundy, wildlife habitat

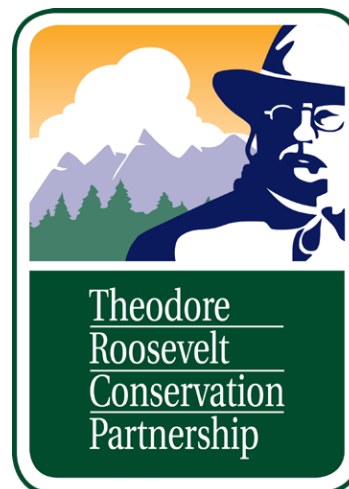
restoration biologist for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. “These efforts have been range-wide on the monument, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and private lands, and we have been working on a watershed scale across all land ownership boundaries. The overall rangeland health has been improved and we have been able to spread out the use of summer, transitional, and winter ranges to allow for good grazing management at a multiple use level. We feel like all of these efforts are additive and are helping preserve the storied history of hunting world class mule deer that has been enjoyed in the past and have complete confidence that these efforts will allow us to be able to enjoy this tradition long into the future.”

Left: Habitat improvements in Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument.

In summary...

Hunters and anglers are observers. Those who pay attention will notice the flash of a trout's mouth as it swallows a drifting nymph or an antler betraying a bedded buck. This attentiveness can also serve our collective interests when it comes to national monuments. It is critical that our community take an active role to ensure our priorities are incorporated into relevant presidential proclamations and subsequent management plans.

Since the Antiquities Act became law in 1906, eighteen Presidents—nine Republicans and nine Democrats—have set aside national treasures as monuments for the American people to enjoy. As described through the four stories within this report, hunters and anglers are among the communities who have benefited most from national monuments, as these special habitats are safeguarded from development and provide some of the best hunting and fishing available.



The outdoors is big business in America, and national monuments help support the \$862 billion outdoor recreation economy that includes hunting and fishing.

America's hunters and anglers stand ready and willing to work with present and future administrations, local communities, and other stakeholders to ensure future national monuments are shaped through shared priorities that capture the hunt-fish principles outlined in this report. This includes creating monuments that safeguard fish and wildlife habitat, maintain reasonable public access for hunting, fishing, and wildlife management, and provide assurances that authority over fish and wildlife populations will be retained by state management agencies.





Photo: Bob Wick, BLM