

# STEWARDS OF THE SEQUOIA

Division of CTUC non profit 501c3  
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June 6, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Monument Review, MS-1530  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,  
Stewards of the Sequoia are pleased to hear the Department of the Interior is performing a much needed and long overdue review of Monuments questionably created using the Antiquities Act.

Our members care deeply about Forest Health and helping the Giant Sequoia groves to thrive.

We offer the following recommendations for changes to the Giant Sequoia Monument.-

- The Giant Sequoia Monument was intended to protect the Giant Sequoia Groves, but instead has caused massive fuel buildups putting the Giant Sequoia's at risk and greatly harming overall forest health, harm to the watershed and harm to wildlife.
1. **We would like to see forest health and Giant Sequoia health improved and would suggest the best way to do this is to allow the Forest Service to be able to actively manage the area. We would therefore recommend removing restrictions to management within the Giant Sequoia Monument.**
    - Some forms of recreation are prohibited or restricted that were enjoyed in the area prior to the Clinton Giant Sequoia Monument Addition Proclamation. This has harmed the local economy and harmed the ability of the public to enjoy their public lands. Recreation restrictions have also caused many of the trails to become overgrown making them unavailable for any form of recreation.
  2. **We would like to see the area made available once more to all forms of recreation.**
    - The 1990 Sequoia National Forest Mediated Settlement determined that about 27,000 acres of lands were sufficient to protect the Giant Sequoia Groves as recommended by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Save the Redwoods
  3. **We would suggest that the Giant Sequoia Monument area be restored to the 27,000 acres actually required for Giant Sequoia protection, and would like to see Monument restrictions limited to those contained President Bush's Giant Sequoia Monument Proclamation 6457 of July 14, 1992 to better allow for management and recreation.**

Over the past weeks I have been talking with folks who have lived in the Giant Sequoia Monument Area for decades such as the Upper Tule Association, realtors and lodge owners, All of them agree the Monument restrictions have prevented the Forest Service from doing the active management the area needs to thin the forest and make the forest fire tolerant.

A picture is worth a thousand words. On the left side of the below picture the Forest Service has done emergency fuel reduction adjacent to the paved Western Divide Highway. Very few areas in the Giant Sequoia Monument have had fuel reduction like this done and in most areas it is prohibited. On the right side of the picture no management has been allowed making it extremely overgrown full of dying or dead trees and unable to tolerate wildfire. The photo was taken on 6/5/2017 near the Ponderosa.





Noted Giant Sequoia expert Doctor Doug Piirto PHD cautioned against the Clinton expansion of the Giant Sequoia Monument and confirms many of the points we raise. Dr. Piirto stated in a letter on 6/1/2017-

- I have always felt that some type of sub-watershed designation for the areas within which the giant sequoia trees occur is needed for their long-term management.
- I have repeatedly pointed out that a vast variety of ecological conditions exists in and around each giant sequoia grove necessitating a flexible range of management that a national monument would not allow.
- I opposed the large size of the national monument that was being considered because it adversely affected the economic working circle base for the Sequoia National Forest. And, such a large area national monument designation would have (as I predicted) a big effect on the local economy and forest products industry. I stated repeatedly that a healthy forest products industry located in the southern Sierra's was and is necessary to respond to the vast variety of ecological conditions found both within and around the giant sequoias. Sawmill closures and reduced sawmill production occurred as a result of national monument designation.

- Further, today's 100+ million dead trees in the Sierra Nevada's occurred in part because the conifer stands were overstocked with trees. These overstocked stands became highly stressed during the long drought which in turn made them vulnerable to attack by a variety of forest disease and insects species. The very restrictive USDA Forest Service cutting that developed during President Clinton's era along with Sequoia National Monument designation prevented a more aggressive thinning program that might have alleviated some of the major mortality we are seeing in the Sierra Nevada.

There are broad local concerns about the Monument Proclamation. The local governments of Tulare Fresno and Kern Counties wisely objected to the Clinton Monument Expansion over concerns about the potential harm to the environment and economy which have since proven to be all too true.

Tulare County filed a lawsuit in 2002 objecting to the Clinton expansion of the Sequoia Monument no doubt due to their concerns about the Monument harming forest health, eliminating jobs and harming recreation.

<https://www.justice.gov/osg/brief/tulare-county-v-george-w-bush-opposition>

In an April 2000 World Net Daily article Bruce Hafenfeld President of the California Cattleman's Association pointed out that the Giant Sequoia experts determined that 27,000 acres was sufficient to protect all the Giant Sequoia Groves.

*Hafenfeld expressed "disappointment" over what he considers a breach of faith on the part of those organizations now promoting monument designation at the White House.*

*"In 1990, my wife and I were involved with most of the same groups that are promoting this [monument designation] now," he says. "We were the signatories for the Cattlemen's Association in that process — and that process took two years to complete. ... There were many, many meetings in different locations to bring these groups of folks together. These people had appealed the Forest Service's Land Use Management Plan, and we were given intervener status in that.*

*"Instead of going to court, we went to a mediation process with them — Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Save the Redwoods, and so on were all signatories and a part of that process.*

*"These folks were the experts," Hafenfeld noted. "We're cattle people — not tree people. We listened to them during that process on what was needed to protect the sequoia redwood groves, and it was decided that for the mediated settlement a little over 19,000 acres would be set aside that would encompass all of the grove areas plus a buffer of about 7,000 acres, for a total of 26,000 or 27,000 acres.*

*"We agreed to that. We signed an agreement to protect the redwoods for eternity. President Bush in 1992 put a presidential proclamation on it endorsing that mediated settlement and the acreage that would protect and set aside those redwoods forever. It's very hard for me to understand how they can jump from 27,000 acres to well over 400,000," he said.*

<http://www.wnd.com/2000/04/4655/>

In that same article Nathaniel Lawrence, senior attorney for the New York-based non-profit Natural Resources Defense Council one of the main proponents of 327,000 acre designation, stated he does not regard the acreage as excessive. He went on to say-

*"That's really what you need to take care of the whole area, to take care of the whole biological community, not just the trees but the forest in which they grow and the associated wildlife and so on," Lawrence told WorldNetDaily. "It doesn't make any sense to save the trees and not the forest around them."*

Time has shown the Monument designation and restrictions have harmed the Forest. We think it makes no sense to have a Monument designation that harms the forest. The Monument experiment has failed.

We agree the forest needs to be saved and rolling back the Giant Sequoia Monument area to the 27,000 acres agreed to in the 1990 Sequoia Mediated Settlement by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Save the Redwoods is prudent step we should make today. Allowing the Forest Service to actively manage our forest as needed is another.

Sincerely,

Chris Horgan  
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cc: Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Honorable Devin Nunes  
Kern County Board of Supervisors

*"Since being founded in 2004, Stewards of the Sequoia continues to be the largest on-the-ground organization of volunteers in the Sequoia National Forest. Our crews have maintained over 3000 miles of trails and have planted hundreds of trees in reforestation projects. We represent in excess of 3000 members whose activities include camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, motorized recreation, boating, windsurfing, rock climbing and horse riding"*

Promoting Responsible Recreation & Environmental Stewardship