



The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20240

The Honorable Brenda Mallory
Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden, Secretary Haaland, and Chair Mallory:

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to public lands, environmental conservation, and historical and cultural conservation. Through your America the Beautiful initiative, you have followed through on your promise to expand permanent protections and public access to the great outdoors, most recently through the designation of the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument, and previously the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument and the Castner Range National Monument, among others.

We urge you to capitalize on that momentum and continue building on this administration's legacy as ardent champions for public lands by designating the Chuckwalla National Monument in the California Desert.

Like Camp Hale and Castner Range, the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument is a former military training site and maneuver area steeped in military history. In fact, the entirety of the proposed monument was once a part of the Desert Training Center (DTC), which was first commanded by General George Patton. The proposed monument also holds the remains of two divisional camps, one of which was the headquarters for the entire DTC. The DTC is perhaps most famous for preparing US troops for warfare in the harshest of desert climates during WWII. That military legacy continues today with a number of critical military exercises taking place in or around the proposal area.

Moreover, a report from the Sonoran Institute, Evaluating Encroachment Pressures on the Military Mission in the California Desert Region, determined that continued desert conservation is critical to preserve the military mission at five separate major military bases: Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (China Lake), Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, Edwards Air Force Base, Fort Irwin National Training Center, and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (29 Palms).

Additionally, federal protection for this place achieves multiple objectives, all while not interfering with existing plans for renewable energy development as proposed in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. It's a victory on multiple fronts.

As retired senior military leaders, we have seen firsthand how having access to public lands benefits our veterans, active duty/reserve forces, and our families. Whether turned to as an affordable family vacation while on leave, or providing places for veterans to find solace and reconnect with family members and fellow veterans in the wake of their service. Our nation's public lands are vital to our military community.

Furthermore, designating this area a national monument would have the added benefit of safeguarding and enhancing equitable access to public lands for under-resourced communities and communities of color – two communities heavily represented within our military ranks.

Veterans have long been champions of our nation's public lands. We're here, at the ready, to work with you to do whatever we can to see the Chuckwalla National Monument made a reality – for ourselves, our fellow veterans, and for future generations.

Sincerely,

LTG Charley Otstott, US Army (R)
MG Paul Eaton, US Army (R)
MG Rick Olson, US Army (R)
MG Tammy Smith, US Army (R)
MG Tony Taguba, US Army (R)
BG Steve Anderson, US Army (R)
RADM Jamie Barnett, US Navy (R)
BGen Leif Hendrickson, USMC (R)
RADM Mike Mathis, US Navy (R)

Cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Alex Padilla
Congressman Raul Ruiz