



10 October 2024

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

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned retired senior military leaders, write to express our strong support for the designations of Chuckwalla, Kw'tsán, and Sáttítla national monuments. Your leadership on protecting America's public lands has been commendable, and we urge you to use your authorities under the Antiquities Act to cement this legacy by permanently safeguarding these significant landscapes and honoring Tribal sovereignty.

As military leaders, we recognize the strategic and historical value of preserving our nation's natural and cultural heritage. Public lands hold profound military significance, not only as areas where military training and operations have occurred but also as places that veterans and military families have long cherished for their beauty and solitude – spots for reunion and reflection. Specifically:

- The proposed **Chuckwalla National Monument** would protect approximately 627,000 acres of the California desert and honor veterans by preserving a portion of the historic Desert Training Center, where General Patton trained military units for the “harshest of desert warfare” during WWII. Moreover, analysis shows that desert conservation is critical to supporting ongoing modern-day missions from five major military bases - Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, Edwards Air Force Base, Fort Irwin National Training Center, and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms. Furthermore, these protections would help ensure habitat connectivity for desert bighorn sheep, burro deer, and other wildlife impacted by climate change, and protect important tribal cultural resources. The proposed national monument would not only support operational training, it would also support the social, mental, and physical health of military members and their families by providing access to public lands stationed aboard these California bases. The proposal has significant community support locally and throughout the state.

- The proposed **Kw'tsán National Monument** would protect 390,000 acres and is the homeland of the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe. This landscape is uniquely situated in the perimeter of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps military installations in the surrounding Imperial and Yuma Counties, respectively. The areas within the proposed Kw'tsán National Monument already offer many opportunities for military families and veterans to enjoy recreation, reflection, and connection with the land. Protecting and preserving this place into national monument status would provide equitable access to nature for all, including military families stationed nearby.
- The proposed **Sáttítla National Monument** would protect a 200,000-acre area, within Northern California's Medicine Lake Highlands, that is sacred to the Pit River Tribe and that serves as one of California's most important headwaters, providing clean water to millions of people, farms, and businesses. This special and sacred place provides solace and healing for many, including veterans returning from combat. Its rugged beauty offers a natural retreat, fostering mental and emotional restoration for those who have given so much in service to our nation. Protecting this landscape is not just an environmental imperative but a commitment to the well-being of our nation's defenders.

For generations, military veterans have played a critical role in the stewardship of our nation's public lands. This patriotic tradition began with President Theodore Roosevelt, a veteran himself, whose commitment to preserving America's natural wonders laid the foundation for today's public lands system. Your continuation of this legacy, Mr. President, will solidify your role as the Public Lands President.

Additionally, each of the places we've listed in this letter and urged protections for are sacred to Tribal communities. That makes them important to veterans and military families. In fact, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has [noted](#): "*American Indians and Alaska Natives serve in the U.S. Armed Services at a higher rate than any other group.*" These communities have served in every major military action going back to the Revolution, but often the stories are not told.

You have already made great strides in safeguarding over 1.6 million acres, including recent expansions of the San Gabriel Mountains and Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monuments. The designation of Chuckwalla, Kw'tsán, and Sáttítla National Monuments in California would be a fitting continuation of your historic efforts and would help cement your legacy as a champion for our nation's public lands, on par with the conservation legacy of military veteran and 26th president of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt.

In closing, we urge you to use your authority under the Antiquities Act to protect these special places permanently. The military significance, cultural importance, and natural beauty of Chuckwalla, Kw'tsán, and Sáttítla make them worthy of permanent protection. Your leadership on this issue will leave a lasting legacy of stewardship, ensuring that these landscapes remain unspoiled for all Americans for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our nation's public lands.

Sincerely,

Major General (Ret) Paul Eaton, USA

Major General (Ret) Ralph L. Haynes, USA, MD, MBA

Major General (Ret) Gale S. Pollock, USA, CRNA, FACHE, FAAN

Assistant Surgeon General RDML (Ret) Bryan D. Hardin, USPHS

Brigadier General (Ret) Steven M. Anderson, USA

Brigadier General (Ret) Stephen Cheney, USAF

Brigadier General (Ret) Mark O'Neill, USA