

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Sally Jewell
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Tom Vilsack
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Senator Diane Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 26, 2016

Dear President Obama, Secretary Jewell, Secretary Vilsack, and Senator Feinstein,

As Christian leaders committed to answering our Genesis call to steward God's earth, we thank you for your efforts that recently culminated with President Obama's designation of three new national monuments in California: Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, and Castle Mountains.

Protecting these places is important to our communities' spiritual life. Out of reverence for the dignity and culture of those who have answered the divine call to till and keep this land for generations before, we are grateful for preservation of Native American cultural sites in these monuments.

We also value wild places to encounter God. Numerous biblical accounts tell us of many people of faith, including Jesus, who sought respite and rejuvenation in the desert wildernesses. These wild places are hard to come by in our modern bustling world. We now have the confidence that for generations to come, people can practice their faith and draw inspiration from the beauty, solitude, dark night skies, and wild nature of the desert.

With the designation of these monuments, we have also improved chances of survival for many of God's beautiful and unique creatures. We want future generations to experience wonder and awe at the bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, golden eagles, mountain lions, and bobcats, among others. We are also just barely beginning to understand the intricate ways God's web of life is interconnected, and we know our own human lives are mysteriously bound up with a diversity of creatures. As Ecclesiastes 3:19 reminds us: "the fate of humans and the fate of the animals are the same: as one dies so does the other; both have the same breath."

As religious leaders, we resolve to do our part to foster appreciation for the treasures of our national parks and monuments. We will call on Christian communities to deepen appreciation of the ecological and cultural wonders of the California desert, as well as celebrate God's beautiful creation, by visiting these newly designated monuments.

With profound gratitude,



Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr.
Resident Bishop, San Francisco Area, the United Methodist Church
and
President of the Council of Bishops for the United Methodist Church
West Sacramento, CA

Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño
The Los Angeles Area of the United Methodist Church
Pasadena, CA

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson
Ecumenical Officer, the United Methodist Church
Pasadena, CA

Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop
Sierra Pacific Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Sacramento, Burlingame, and Fresno, CA

The Rev. Murray D. Finck, Bishop
Pacifica Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Santa Ana, CA

The Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Ph.D., Bishop
Southwest California Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Glendale, CA

Bishop David Rice
Diocese of San Joaquin, The Episcopal Church
Modesto, CA

Bishop Barry Beisner
Diocese of Northern California, The Episcopal Church
Sacramento, CA

Bishop Marc Handley Andrus
Diocese of California, The Episcopal Church
San Francisco, CA

Diane L. Weible, Conference Minister
Northern California Nevada Conference, the United Church of Christ
Oakland, California

Rev. Felix C. Villanueva, Ed.D., Conference Minister
The United Church of Christ in Southern California and Nevada
Altadena, CA

Rev. Steve Bills, Executive Minister
American Baptist Churches of the Central Pacific Coast
Portland, OR

Russ Matteson, District Executive Minister
Pacific Southwest District, Church of the Brethren
LaVerne, CA

The Rev. Marilyn S. Gamm, Transitional Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of Riverside, Presbyterian Church (USA)
San Bernardino, CA

The Rev. Linda L. Culbertson, General Presbyter
Presbytery of the Pacific, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Los Angeles, CA

The Rev. Robert M. Watkins, Transitional Presbyter
Presbytery of Sacramento, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Sacramento, CA

The Rev. Joseph S. Lee, Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of San Jose, Presbyterian Church (USA)
San Jose, CA

The Rev. Nancy M. Clegg, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Stockton, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Manteca, CA

Rev. Jeff Hutcheson, Presbytery Pastor for Mission and Vision
Presbytery of San Francisco, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Berkeley, CA

Rev. Tom Cramer, Presbytery Leader for Vision and Mission
Presbytery of Los Ranchos, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Anaheim, CA

Outdoor ministry leaders are also celebrating the three new monuments:

Sloan Hamilton, Operations Manager
Loch Leven Christian Camp and Conference Center
Mentone, CA

Bill Slocumb, Director
Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers, Inc.
Camp Meeker, CA

Steve Solberg, Executive Director
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Northern California
Ben Lomond, CA

This letter is also endorsed by members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Earth Care Congregations network in California, including:

Dr. Tom English, Creation Care Educator for Synod of Southern California and Hawaii
Member, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church

Carlsbad, CA

Mark Adelson, First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino
San Bernardino, California

Jewel Payne, Davis Community Church
Davis, CA

Patricia Kinney, First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto
Palo Alto, CA

Ecophilians of St. Mark Presbyterian Church
Newport Beach, CA

Nancy Wiens, First Presbyterian Church San Rafael
San Rafael, CA

Creation Justice Ministries represents the creation care policies of 38 Christian communions, including Baptist conventions, mainline Protestant, Historically Black Churches, Peace Church, and Orthodox communions.
Learn more at www.creationjustice.org