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Archery Trade Association: Preservation vs. Conservation
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The recent debate over public lands, and especially monuments, has important implications for bowhunting and archery and, in a larger sense, hunting, shooting and fishing. The privilege of outdoor recreation is a birthright of all Americans, and in the conservation sense, it's what separates us from the rest of the world. Yet, those privileges would be meaningless without access to the vast array of public lands that have been designated and conserved for our use and enjoyment.

Bowhunters and archers, especially in the western U.S., have likely heard the opinions of outdoor preservationists about the review of national monuments being conducted by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. According to preservationists, this review is sacrilege, and they say no monument designations have ever been revoked. These outdoor preservationists must have forgotten that 11 monuments have been abolished, and monument boundaries have been redrawn nearly 20 times by multiple presidents through the years. The fact that the changes were minor and not challenged in court is likely why they have been ignored. But these are the facts, nonetheless.

The controversy surrounding monuments involves the Antiquities Act of 1906. This law gives the president the authority, by presidential proclamation, to create national monuments from federal lands to protect significant natural, cultural, or scientific features. Because monument designations are solely the province of the president, there's been controversy associated with these actions since day one. As a result, presidential powers under the Antiquities Act were reduced in 1950 when Jackson Hole National Monument was incorporated into an enlarged Grand Teton National Park. Now, any future creation or enlargement of national monuments in Wyoming will require Congressional consent. Presidential powers were again reduced in 1979 when Jimmy Carter designated 56 million acres of national monuments in Alaska. Now, if any president uses the Antiquities Act to withdraw greater than 5,000 acres in Alaska, Congress must ratify the action.

Historically, monument designation has varied widely among our presidents. In recent times, Presidents Nixon, Reagan and George H.W. Bush did not create any national monuments, while Carter designated 15, Clinton created 19 and expanded three, George W. Bush designated six, and Obama created or expanded 34 monuments protecting more than 500 million acres of land and water.

Here are a few monument designations that are examples of how Presidents have taken these actions unilaterally:

• When the Grand Staircase monument was created by Bill Clinton, the Utah congressional delegation learned about it in the newspapers the same time as the public. Some thought environmentalists were privy to the process, but that thought was nixed when a Natural Resources Defense Council staffer said, "…we didn't really know a lot about what they're doing or when they did it." Clearly, few who had been working on this issue were involved in the final decision.

• Clinton also employed the Antiquities Act to create Hanford Reach, a beautiful stretch of 51 miles of the Columbia River that includes salmon spawning grounds and important riverine habitat. The area is also home to extensive farming, energy production, Native American tribes and local governments, all having vested interests in the river. Instead of using the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Clinton designated a monument that was far larger than environmentalists had hoped for and unlike any of the compromise plans being negotiated by local groups. As a result, a few people got more than they asked for while others were left feeling disenfranchised.

• In 1978, Jimmy Carter designated 56 million acres in Alaska as national monuments. Years later, Carter characterized the opposition to his act as wealthy corporate interests, but a review of media reports of the time indicates protests included an Alaska-city mayor; students and a future president of the University of Alaska; and a judge, school teachers, construction workers, lumberjacks, longshoremen and a wide array of sportsmen's groups. Every elected Alaskan official at the time, including Senator Ted Stevens and Congressman Don Young, opposed Carter's actions. Nearly 40 years later, many Alaskans are still angry about the move, and most are working to regain control over their lands and resources.

• In 2009, George W. Bush designated an area of Pacific marine preserves that is 9 million acres larger than the combined area of the national parks, national refuges and national landscape conservation system. The vast and remote nature of these preserves gave Bush a chance to positively strengthen an otherwise inconsistent conservation record just two weeks before he left office. To this day, most Americans – save a few scientists and those few familiar with Pacific island ecosystems – know these monuments exist which, in political terms, made them a safe move.

The foregoing is why the Antiquities Act is such an aberration in the American way of deciding the fate of public resources. When the act passed, the context was well-intentioned and aimed at war memorials and monuments of people, causes, and rare iconic landscapes like the Grand Canyon, the first monument designated by Teddy Roosevelt. It's unfortunate that Zinke's current attempt to democratize the monument process by adding layers of input and transparency are being overshadowed by campaigns to smear the messenger rather than look carefully at the process.

In my view, the actions taken by Zinke seem more in line with the way America has done business for nearly 250 years. Despite our frustrations with the process, checks and balances have been used to define and allocate resources throughout our great country, from the smallest communities to New York City. All uses of public lands or resources are subject to deliberation

by our legislative and executive branches of government, from rural counties and states to urbanized regions covering multiple states. And when there are differing opinions or any parties feel disenfranchised, they use our judicial system to seek redress.

The Antiquities Act is an inherently political process where one branch of government is allowed to act unilaterally, creating conditions for some to politicize actions. Unlike the American democratic process, the Antiquities Act allows presidents to bypass Congress, local and state governments, private citizens and public organizations, business interests, local ethnic and environmental groups, and more. Further evidence that the act has become a political tool is clear when you review the dates of most monument designations; many came as a president was winding down his administration. The actions of lame-duck presidents, taken as they are leaving office, are almost solely political and, worse, there's often no recourse.

So how should we designate public lands? In my mind, there has to be a process better than the Antiquities Act. With most democratic actions, all sides are forced to talk and attempt to find a compromise, especially at the local level. Our country is full of evidence where factions on many sides of a land issue figured out how to share the space and resources. It's often messy and the process takes time, but it can and does work. Unfortunately, an integral part of compromise is no one gets everything they want and – if it's a true compromise – everyone is a bit unhappy. Alternatively, when a decision leaves even one group happy, it's not a compromise that will endure.

Yet, some argue that without the ability to arbitrarily designate monuments, bedrock conservation principles won't be possible. This thought negates Congress and many state and local processes that are used to make decisions about the classification, use and access to public land and resources. Hunters, shooters and anglers are constantly engaged at local and state levels, and work tirelessly to improve access and protect fish and wildlife populations. Why should national parks, forests, refuges and all other federal lands be any different?

In some parts of the country, bowhunters and archers can only use federal lands to pursue their avocation. So why can't we use a process of thoughtful compromise to sort out what's possible and how activities will mesh without damaging the land and permanently diminishing resources? I know this is an ideal way of thinking, but isn't democracy an ideal that is messy and difficult in practice?

Finally, conservation – an aspiration of Teddy Roosevelt – is so much more than just designating land. Too many preservationists think of conservation as only pertaining to land classification and designation, which is why they love the Antiquities Act. Designations under the act often come with no-trespassing signs and intricate rules and regulations that protect privileged users, disallowing many forms of outdoor recreation like hunting and shooting, not to mention land uses like farming, grazing, forestry, and energy development. Sadly, preservationists have even worked to ensure there's no WiFi on public lands which, for most Americans, is the only way they will ever connect to these vast resources in which they have an ownership stake.

Conservation takes people to manage, maintain and protect lands and resources. It also requires people to guide, assist and support the public as they enjoy the land. True conservation that

incorporates local and regional values also enjoys the protection from residents who come to its defense. That's why Secretary Zinke's recent efforts to strengthen the "boots on the ground" staff on federal lands, as well as reach out to states and local communities to build support, is long overdue. Zinke, a Montana native who grew up hunting and fishing on federal lands, understands the strength of an empowered group of local residents when it comes to protecting resources valuable to all Americans.

Whether its protecting fish, wildlife, forest, grasslands, mountain tops or wetlands, conservation is Americans working together both on and around public lands. That's why it's time to abolish the Antiquities Act as a political tool used by both Democrats and Republicans to dictate land use. Alternatively, let's dust off our cumbersome yet fair and equitable democratic processes, which have served our nation so well since its founding and are being used, as we speak, at all levels of government to decide how we share resources and access to our lands. Let's stop trying to be winners or losers in the public lands game. We all win when we all lose a little – it's how America has done business for decades, and it still works.

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Sincerely,
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