

June 7th, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the 92 undersigned organizations and the millions of members and supporters we collectively represent, we urge you to designate Castner Range as a national monument through the powers granted to your office under the Antiquities Act of 1906.

This action would affirm your commitment to protecting our national treasures as well as help counteract a history of inequitable access to the outdoors. We greatly appreciate your administration's commitment to preserve 30 percent of America's land and waters by 2030 in an equitable way as outlined in your *America the Beautiful* initiative. Permanently protecting Castner Range through executive action as authorized by the Antiquities Act is an essential step towards making that initiative a reality. We thank you and your Administration for the attention you have paid to the community thus far including Secretary Haaland's recent visit.

Castner Range, located near El Paso, Texas, is home to 11 square miles of West Texas beauty and forms a picturesque backdrop to the world's largest binational community. This unique landscape is rich with rare and endangered wildlife as well as dozens of sacred Native American sites including rock shelters, petroglyphs, bedrock mortars and habitations dating back 10,000 years. Castner Range National Monument would improve the region's local economy and reinforce local and national pride in an area of the country that has endured hardship in recent years.

In addition to the undersigned organizations, the Castner Range National Monument designation is supported by the people of El Paso, its business community, and its elected legislators including U.S. Representative Veronica Escobar, who has led efforts to secure this designation through legislation in Congress. We echo the sentiments of the tens of thousands of letters of support delivered to your and previous administrations as well as the recent letter to you from Congresswoman Escobar. Communities in and around El Paso have been leading the effort to preserve Castner Range for more than half a century. We stand with these local communities, diverse organizations, and the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Texas who have been tirelessly fighting to permanently preserve and provide equal access to this beautiful area.

In order to make your *America the Beautiful* initiative a reality, millions of acres of public and private land must be protected. As we protect more land and waters, we also must prioritize correcting environmental injustices, addressing inequitable access to the outdoors, protecting biodiversity and ecosystem stability, and addressing the climate crisis. Designating Castner Range as a national monument would be an important step in addressing each of these priorities in West Texas.

Correcting Environmental Injustices and Addressing Inequitable Access to the Outdoors:

The people of El Paso, Texas should have more access to open space. Most nearby state and local parks charge admission fees that create a significant additional barrier in equitable access.

According to the United Nations most recent data, El Paso has 3.01 square meters of green space per capita compared to 3,856.79 square meters per capita in the more affluent city of Houston, Texas. The land was used by Fort Bliss army post, but the army stopped operations there in 1966 and declared the land excess in 1971. While the army has conserved and protected the area, it is inaccessible to the community. We ask your administration to set forth a plan to safely turn the military installation into an area for recreation, solace, comfort, and equitable access to the outdoors, and we urge your administration to work with local communities and native tribes as an integral component of ongoing management.

Protecting Biodiversity and Ecosystem Stability:

Mexican poppies bloom annually in the arid desert creating a unique ecosystem and dramatic landscape that is the pride of El Paso. The proposed monument will connect to the Franklin Mountains State Park, making a contiguous piece of habitat for a diverse array of wildlife.

Castner Range and its surrounding area are home to a variety of beautiful plants and wildlife, some of which are endangered. Because Castner Range has been officially closed to the public for decades, little is known about what species reside there. Some old records indicate 743 species of plants have been recorded from Castner Range, including the endangered Sneed's pincushion cactus (*Escobaria sneedii*). The Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*), a Texas state listed threatened species, has been recently seen on open lands within Castner Range.

Addressing our Climate Crisis:

The nature crisis and the climate crisis are two sides of the same coin. We cannot stabilize the climate without increasing protections for nature. One of the most cost-effective strategies for mitigating climate change is to protect more land and water. Castner Range is a natural flood buffer and water filtration system.

Ultimately this land belongs to our children and future generations. Designating Castner Range as a national monument would not only permanently protect the area from future development but will illustrate a significant step to expand conservation education to marginalized communities who disproportionately bear the brunt of climate impacts and historically have less access to nature.

As you move to make your vision for *America the Beautiful* a reality, we urge you to use powers granted to your office under the Antiquities Act to designate Castner Range as a national monument. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to our public lands.

Sincerely,

Accountable.US

Azul

Aransas First - Land Trust

Battle Born Progress - Nevada

Arizona Faith Network

BikeTexas

California Environmental Voters
California Wilderness Coalition
Californians for Western Wilderness
Castner Heights Association
Castner Heights Neighborhood Association
Chispa LCV
Chispa TX
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservation Minnesota
Conservation Voters for Idaho
Conservation Voters New Mexico
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthworks
El Paso 500 Women Scientists Pod
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environment Texas
Fifth Sun Project
Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition
Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of Sloan Canyon & Walking Box Ranch
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Rio Bosque
G.T. Powers Drive Neighborhood Watch Program
Get Outdoors Nevada
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Healthy Ocean Coalition
HG Conservation Solutions
High Desert Native Plants LLC
Hiking My Feelings
Hill Country Conservancy
Hispanic Access Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)
Holguin Consulting Inc.
Inclusive Outdoors Project
Inland Ocean Coalition
Insights El Paso Science Center
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Katy Prairie Conservancy
Keystone Heritage Park
Latino Outdoors
LBC Action
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of El Paso
Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Mormon Women for Ethical Government Texas Chapter	Southern Group - Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club
Mountain Mamas	Texas Land Trust Council
National Ocean Protection Coalition	The Chaparral Lands Conservancy
National Parks Conservation Association	The Conservation Fund
National Trust for Historic Preservation	The Frontera Land Alliance
National Wildlife Federation	The Mountain Pact
Native Voters Alliance Nevada	The Pew Charitable Trusts
Nevada Conservation League	The Rachel Carson Council
New Mexico Wild	The Wilderness Society
New Mexico Wildlife Federation	Travis Audubon Society
North Hills Neighborhood Pride Association	Trust for Public Land
Nuestra Tierra	Tuleyome
Oregon League of Conservation Voters	Vet Voice Foundation
Outdoor Afro	Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Patagonia	Waterway Advocates
Public Land Solutions	Wild Arizona
Sierra Club	Wimberley Valley Watershed Association
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council	

CC: The Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Veronica Escobar, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Brenda Mallory, White House Council on Environmental Quality