



Pilot Rock in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. Credit: Ashland Daily Photo

RE: Recommended Expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument

To Whom It May Concern,

May 28, 2015

As scientists with extensive professional experience related to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest, we write to express our full support for expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (hereafter "Monument"). The existing Monument is located in southwest Oregon on the California border.

Established by presidential proclamation in June 2000, the Monument is unique among the BLM's National Conservation Lands in that it was established specifically to preserve an area of "remarkable biological diversity." Sitting at the crossroads of four distinct ecoregions and encompassing a wide range of topography, climate and geology, the greater Cascade-Siskiyou landscape is widely recognized as one of the most biologically diverse places in North America. The Monument proclamation describes it as an "ecological wonder" that is "home to a spectacular variety of rare and beautiful species of plants and animals, whose survival in this region depends upon its continued ecological integrity".¹

While we applaud the initial creation of the Monument as a means to conserve this area's treasure trove of biological resources, scenic beauty and recreational values, we are concerned that existing Monument boundaries are insufficient to assure persistence of the many biological "Objects of Interest" that the Monument was established to protect. As summarized in a 2011 scientific report on this topic², there are several important reasons why existing boundaries are unlikely to sustain the ecological integrity of this area:

¹ US Dept. of Interior. 2000. Presidential proclamation 7318 establishing the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon. June 9, 2000. Washington, D.C.

² Frost, E., D. Odion, P. Trail, J. Williams, J. Alexander, B. Barr, R. Brock, D. DellaSala, P. Hosten, S. Jessup, F. Lang, M. Parker, J. Rossa, D. Sarr and D. Southworth. 2011. Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Boundary Study: Identification of Priority Areas for Monument Expansion. 14 pp.

- Many special-status plant and animal populations referenced in the Monument's proclamation, as well as high quality examples of the area's unique plant communities, remain outside existing boundaries, where they are vulnerable to incompatible management;
- Some existing boundaries have no ecological basis (e.g., the Oregon-California state line, incomplete watersheds), which over time, may compromise the integrity of the Monument;
- Climate change in the region is altering the ranges of plants and animals that are the focal points for conservation, in some cases pushing them outside of currently protected areas³;
- The human population of southwest Oregon is growing rapidly. As a result, more areas immediately adjacent to the Monument are facing increased development or intensive land use pressures (e.g., logging, residential expansion, water diversions) that are likely to undermine long-term persistence of the Monument's biological resources.

Without additional conservation investment, available scientific evidence suggests that some of the most valuable biological resources both within and immediately adjacent to the Monument are at high risk of irreversible degradation and loss.

Given these significant and overarching concerns, it is our professional opinion that expansion of the Monument is necessary for the area's extraordinary values to be sustained over the long term. Specifically, we endorse including five carefully selected areas of adjoining BLM and other public lands within the Monument, as recommended by the scientists' 2011 boundary report and detailed in an updated summary of these areas.⁴ Proposed additions described in this report:

- were identified using an interdisciplinary, science-based process;
- contain many biological "Objects of Interest" that were highlighted in the Monument proclamation;
- play a vital role in maintaining ecological integrity of the landscape the Monument was established to protect, and;
- improve habitat connectivity with nearby federal lands, a factor that is critical for sustaining populations of wide-ranging species.

Perhaps most importantly, expansion of the Monument to include these proposed additions will significantly increase the ability of native plants and animals to adapt to a changing climate, an issue that was not considered when initial Monument boundaries were created, but that will become critical to biodiversity conservation in the coming decades.

³ Olson, D.M., D.A. DellaSala, R.F. Noss, J. R. Strittholt, J. Kaas, M. E. Koopman, and T.F. Allnutt. 2012. Climate change refugia for biodiversity in the Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregion. *Natural Areas Journal* 32:65-74.

⁴ Frost, E.J. and P. Trail. 2015. A Summary of Ecological Values in Proposed Additions to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. Unpublished report available from Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, Ashland, OR.

As professional scientists who value and understand the many benefits of biological diversity and ecological health, we appreciate the opportunity to offer our recommendations for the future of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and urge decision-makers to expand the boundaries of the Monument so that it can successfully achieve the proclamation's stated goal of protecting the area's outstanding biological resources for present and future generations.

Sincerely,

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