



COMMITTEE ON BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0519

Statement on the proposed Sequoia National Monument
March 18, 2000

Thank you and I appreciate having this opportunity to speak here today.

As the representative of the Nineteenth Congressional District, I am privileged to represent part of the Sequoia National Forest. I believe the majestic Sequoia groves within this forest must be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

Unfortunately, President Clinton and Vice-President Gore have chosen to act against science and reason by proposing a Sequoia National Monument, under the President's authority in the Antiquities Act, to protect the Giant Sequoia trees. Under the Antiquities Act, the President has the ability to make national monument designations to preserve land and limit its uses. The Act works to the public's disadvantage since it does not require approval from Congress, *nor* does the law stipulate that the President must solicit public comments. As we have witnessed in the past, the President has used the Antiquities Act to bypass Congress, state and local officials, and most importantly, local residents, to set aside vast tracts of public land and restrict its uses. Now that is happening in our own backyard.

I am opposed to a Sequoia National Monument designation and believe it is a mistake for several reasons.

First, the Sequoias *already* have federal protection and are not logged. The Clinton/Gore proposed action to protect the Giant Sequoias is redundant. A 1992 Presidential Proclamation signed by President George Bush, as a result of the Sequoia Mediated Settlement Plan, protects these groves. The Clinton/Gore plan is unnecessary and repetitive governmental intervention.

The small businesses attempting to make a living harvesting timber in the Sequoia National Forest have not cut Sequoia trees for several decades. Some claim that the President's proposed national monument prevents logging of the Giant Sequoias. That is not correct, as none of these trees are harvested. All Giant Sequoias, old and new, are left untouched.

The *only* management conducted in the forest is of trees located outside of the Sequoia groves and their buffer zones. The foresters here today will tell you that this forest management practice is done to create healthy forests free of fire hazards and disease.

Secondly, the proposed land designation ignores science already available through the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) on the best way to manage the Giant Sequoias. The scientists *disagree* with the designation of a National Monument. The SNEP report said that the best way to keep the forest healthy was through active management of the groves. They did **not**

recommend a monument. In addition, the Giant Sequoia Ecology Cooperative has advocated a flexible and adaptive management strategy. A monument designation would undermine this kind of flexibility.

Third, I am disturbed that President Clinton appears to be driven by election year politics and neglects to understand the serious impacts a national monument designation would have on the local economy, as well as the negative effects of the proposal on multiple-use activities and recreational access. The proposed designation will eliminate jobs in rural communities through the restriction of multiple-uses in the forest. Tulare County faces 16 percent unemployment and Fresno County is at 12 percent.

Hundreds of jobs and over \$8 million in salaries could be lost if the multiple-uses are restricted or eliminated on all of the proposed 400,000 acres. The multiple-use component on Forest Service land, which allows for fishing, camping, grazing, timber harvesting and many other activities, could be eradicated at the will of the President. He has taken this course in other states and could very well do the same thing locally. I am disgusted with the Clinton/Gore decision to close off access to public lands and cause economic turmoil in rural communities struggling to survive, here and elsewhere.

This monument designation appears to be pursued in exchange for environmental votes in the upcoming election. In his February 14th letter to Agriculture Secretary Glickman, the President specifically mentions his discussions with the Sierra Club and other environmental groups who urged the President to provide permanent protection for the Giant Sequoias. The President has forgotten that public policy involves input from local communities, not just special interest groups with a national political agenda. Environmental organizations based at the national level are often politically motivated and fail to base their public policy efforts on sound science. True environmental stewards never hesitate to seek science-based solutions.

Finally, the inadequate public process involved in this national monument proposal is deplorable. I have received hundreds of phone calls and letters from my constituents who are opposed to the designation, and they justifiably want answers to their concerns. All of these issues must be addressed by the Administration prior to moving forward with any Sequoia plan.

In order to address these concerns, I have introduced with Representatives Bill Thomas and Cal Dooley a bill to require a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study to determine the best scientific manner to protect the Sequoia trees. Since the President has not used the science available through the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP), it is necessary to refocus the Administration on what is truly best, *scientifically best*, for the Giant Sequoias. We can all agree that sound science is the most effective mechanism to preserve the trees. I hope President Clinton will affirm this conclusion and join in supporting this bipartisan, science-based bill.

In closing, I want to reiterate my opposition to this unilateral decision by Clinton/Gore to designate the Sequoia National Monument. The actions of this administration serve to destroy our democracy by silencing the public's voice in land management decisions.

Thank you, again, for giving me this opportunity to speak before you today.