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Secretary Jewell, Secretary Vilsack Applaud President Obama's Designation of Browns Canyon National Monument

*President's Proclamation Fulfills Decade-Long Community Drive to Protect
Spectacular Landscape and World-class Recreation Opportunities*

WASHINGTON, DC – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack today joined members of Congress, local elected officials, and community members from the Upper Arkansas River Valley in applauding the President's designation of Browns Canyon National Monument.

The new monument, located in Chaffee County near the town of Salida, Colorado, spans approximately 21,500 acres of rugged cliffs, colorful rock outcroppings and stunning mountain vistas. Browns Canyon tells the story of the area's native peoples as well as the history of recent settlers and mining communities. The monument protects one of the nation's most popular destinations for whitewater rafting, with the Arkansas River and adjacent uplands supporting world-class recreation opportunities and a strong outdoor economy.

The national monument, comprised of existing federal lands, will continue to be jointly managed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS).

"Today's designation follows more than a decade of work by the local community to protect this spectacular area," said Secretary Jewell. "Browns Canyon draws families and adventure-seekers from near and far, driving a strong outdoor economy. The President's action will ensure that this special place remains central to Colorado's economy and Western way of life for generations to come."

"Browns Canyon is a unique area with a rich cultural and recreational legacy. These lands have provided a home for people for 10,000 years, and the cultural and historical resources protected by this monument honor the area's Native Peoples. It is also a working landscape where ranchers have worked for generations," said Secretary Vilsack. "I am proud that we are conserving and managing landscapes that support important resources and support local economies, especially rural mountain communities."

In December, senior administration officials visited Salida, Colorado, at the request of Senators Michael Bennet and Mark Udall to hear from the community about its vision for Browns Canyon. Legislation to recognize Browns Canyon was first introduced in 2005 by Representative Joel Hefley and Senator Wayne Allard.

The proclamation allows for continued historic uses of the area, including hunting, fishing, and livestock grazing, which will continue to be managed under existing rules and regulations. The designation does not alter or affect the valid water rights of any party and does not affect agreements governing management of the Arkansas River flows. It supports the ongoing cooperative management of the Arkansas Headwater Recreation Area by the BLM and the State of Colorado and preserves existing agreements for recreation uses and access.

The agencies will jointly prepare a management plan for the monument in formal cooperation with the State of Colorado, along with other local governments and tribes, and will be developed in an open process with maximum public involvement from interested stakeholders, area ranchers and other permit holders.

“Browns Canyon National Monument joins spectacular landscapes across the West as part of the National Conservation Lands, America’s newest conservation system which is managed by the BLM,” said BLM Director Neil Kornze. “Traditional uses like grazing will continue in this area, and all Coloradans will have a seat at the table as we work to develop the management plan for this special landscape.”

“The designation of Browns Canyon National Monument signals a renewed commitment for an area respected and loved by tens of thousands of people. We look forward to working with the Bureau of Land Management, the State of Colorado, local communities, organizations and individuals to develop a management plan for the National Monument,” said Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “This land is more than worthy of special designation. This truly is a monument for all.”

Browns Canyon harbors a wealth of scientifically significant geological, ecological, cultural, and historical resources, and is an important area for studies of paleoecology, mineralogy, archaeology, and climate change. The area’s unusual geology and roughly 3,000-foot range in elevation have given rise to a diversity of plants and wildlife, including a significant herd of bighorn sheep, golden eagles, and Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine.

The national monument designation will protect the outstanding opportunities to recreate, including hiking, hunting, horseback riding, mountain biking, fishing and rock climbing, as well as to experience the solitude and undeveloped beauty of this rugged landscape.

Browns Canyon is one of the most popular destinations in the nation for whitewater enthusiasts, totaling more than 90,000 user-days annually, according to the BLM. Commercial rafting on the Arkansas River contributes roughly \$60 million to the local economy, according to the Colorado River Outfitters Association.

For more information on Browns Canyon, please visit www.fs.fed.us/visit/browns-canyon-national-monument.

Browns Canyon was one of three national monuments announced by President Obama today. The Antiquities Act was first exercised by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 to designate Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. Since then, 16 presidents have used this authority to protect unique natural and historic features in America, such as the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, and Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients.

With these new designations, President Obama will have used the Antiquities Act to establish or expand 16 national monuments. Altogether, he has protected more than 260 million acres of public lands and waters – more than any other President – as well as preserved sites that help tell the story of significant people or extraordinary events in American history, such as Cèsar E. Chàvez National Monument in California, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland, and Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Ohio.

Today the President also announced the “Every Kid in Park” initiative that will provide all fourth grade students and their families with free admission to National Parks and other federal lands and waters for a full year. More details on the President’s actions are available [here](#).

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