THANK YOU, THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND BARACK OBAMA

On February 12, 2016 President Obama’s proclamation created in Southern California the Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow and Castle Mountains National Monuments. These three desert national monuments bring protection to a total of 1.8 million acres of fragile desert lands and double the number of acres of public lands President Obama has protected during his presidency. He has protected under national monument status far more acres than any previous president.

The new national monuments, like many others, were created under the authority given to U.S. Presidents by the Antiquities Act of 1906. This law, which was promoted and signed into law in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt, grants presidents the power, without action by Congress, to designate national monuments to protect historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest. The term “scientific interest” has been given a broad interpretation to include pristine wilderness areas. The Mount Lassen National Monument (predecessor to Lassen Peak National Park) was created under the Antiquities Act in 1907.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 was the first of the important federal environmental protection laws. The federal Endangered Species and Environmental Policy Acts, which now guide much of our conservation activities, were not enacted until the 1970’s. We conservationists owe many thanks to President Roosevelt for giving us the Antiquities Act and to President Obama for fully utilizing it. Needless to say, the Antiquities Act, like the Endangered Species Act, has become a hot political topic. It merits our best efforts to defend it.

The full text of bills and the Legislative Analyst’s summary are available on the California Legislature Information website (Click Link Here).

CNPS positions on bills are available at CNPS Legislative Report (Click Link Here). Overview of CNPS Legislation Program (Click Link Here).