



# FACT SHEET

## Why designate a national monument?

### TO CONSERVE SPECIAL VALUES AND HISTORICAL OBJECTS

The public lands surrounding the Dolores River contain nationally significant special values that warrant conservation and protection. These values include the Dolores River and its riparian zone of life, historical sites related to the area's internationally-significant mining legacy, Indigenous cultural sites, outstanding geologic formations, paleontological sites, world-class recreation opportunities, and high biodiversity. In fact, the proposed Dolores Canyons National Monument in Mesa and Montrose counties spans the largest and most biodiverse stretch of unprotected public lands in Colorado.

### TO BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES

A national monument designation would ensure that these public lands are managed in a manner that balances the needs of protecting nature and sustaining local economies, while preserving public access to this incredible place. Protected public lands help local communities to diversify economically, attracting new visitors, businesses, and residents drawn to the quality of life that comes along with new opportunities to recreate. We've seen the positive economic impact that protecting public lands can have in places like Buena Vista and Salida near Browns Canyon National Monument. In 2016, recreation and grazing within the monument directly contributed over [\\$10 million](#) to the local economy.

### TO PRESERVE ACCESS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Between 2001 and 2011, natural areas in the West—including forests, wetlands, deserts, and grasslands—were disappearing at the rate of one football field every 2.5 minutes. We've all seen the impacts of development on our state and know how fast Colorado is changing. It's important that communities come together to determine where access to our outstanding public lands and natural resources should be preserved for future generations.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *What is being proposed?*

The Protect the Dolores Coalition is proposing that a Dolores Canyons National Monument be designated on public lands surrounding the Dolores River in the western portions of Mesa and Montrose counties. The designation would only apply to public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service. Private lands will not be impacted. Following designation, these land management agencies would develop a new management plan through a public process that solicits input and expertise from local residents.

### ***How is a national monument designated?***

National monuments are typically designated by the president. The Antiquities Act grants U.S. presidents the ability to designate federal public lands, waters, and cultural and historical sites as national monuments with a presidential proclamation. Since the Antiquities Act became law in 1906, 18 presidents from both parties have used the Act to protect national monuments. Congress can also create national monuments through legislation. In Colorado, the Antiquities Act was used to protect Colorado National Monument, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Browns Canyon National Monument, and most recently the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument.

There is no proposal or plan to ever create a national park for the Dolores. National parks can only be designated by Congress and are generally managed by the Park Service.

### ***Where in the process is this national monument proposal?***

Currently, the national monument is a proposal from the [Protect the Dolores](#) coalition, a collection of conservation and recreation nonprofit organizations. We are seeking input on this proposal, refining boundaries and building public support. There will continue to be opportunities for public input into the proposal and throughout any subsequent political process.

### ***Is there a finalized map?***

No! Our coalition is taking care to craft boundaries that reflect the special values we are seeking to conserve. As we get input from stakeholders we have and will continue to adjust the proposal.

### ***What's the history of conservation efforts in the Dolores River region?***

The Dolores River and surrounding public lands have been the subject of conservation efforts for over fifty years. Listed as an original study river in the 1969 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, there have been multiple proposals to conserve the outstanding values of the Dolores River region over the years.

### ***How would a national monument benefit local communities?***

Designating a Dolores Canyons National Monument in Mesa and Montrose counties would help diversify local economic opportunities, while maintaining existing water rights, access, and private property rights important to those living close to the land.

Protected public lands in Mesa County, including the Dominguez-Escalante and McInnis Canyons National Conservation Areas and Colorado National Monument, have driven economic diversification and prosperity in Fruita, Grand Junction, and Palisade. A recent study conducted by Colorado Mesa University found that outdoor recreation accounts for 7.2% of Mesa County's GDP and supports 11% of jobs locally.

In Montrose County, community efforts like the Colorado Outdoors Business Park demonstrate how healthy, outdoor spaces drive innovation and economic prosperity. In the county's West End, communities are working to attract and sustain new businesses, while maintaining a shared identity rooted in history and natural resources. A national monument designation would celebrate and highlight the region's storied history, while also ensuring that the extraordinary public lands of the Dolores Canyons are protected in order to drive a more diverse and sustainable economy for future generations of the region.

### ***Would it cost money to visit a Dolores Canyons National Monument?***

No, recreating would remain free to all. While some national monuments managed by the National Park Service, such as Colorado National Monument, do charge entrance fees, most national monuments managed by the National Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management (like that being proposed for the public lands of the Dolores Canyons) do not charge fees and remain entirely open to the public.

### ***These are multiple use lands that are used by local communities for mining, grazing, and recreating. Would a national monument impact these activities?***

A Dolores Canyons National Monument would also protect historic uses of the public lands and water, called “existing rights.” These “existing rights” include: rights-of-way and utility infrastructure, valid mining claims, oil and gas leases, commercial outfitting or guiding, and livestock grazing. National monuments do limit or prohibit future oil and gas leases, mining claims, rights-of-way and utility infrastructure, and public land disposal.

Protecting our public lands is a way of ensuring that the things we love to do—camping, boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, and so on—are protected too. Details about ongoing and future land uses in the Dolores Canyons would be refined in a Resource Management Plan for the national monument that invites community input and expertise.

### ***How would grazing be affected by a national monument?***

Grazing would continue to be permitted in a national monument. Grazing occurs in most national monuments across the West. A national monument doesn’t automatically change how allotments are managed, renewed or transferred to new permittees. Permittees would continue to be able to maintain their allotments and improvements, consistent with BLM and Forest Service regulations and the monument management plan.

### ***What kind of activities would be permitted inside a Dolores Canyons National Monument?***

Visitors and local residents may continue to hike, camp, picnic, hunt, fish, boat, ride horseback, climb, bike, and ride mechanized or motorized vehicles on designated routes like Rimrocker Trail and John Brown Canyon. Ranchers may graze their livestock. Tribal members may access national monuments for cultural, spiritual, and traditional uses and activities.

### ***Would 4WD and OHV access be impacted by a national monument designation?***

Locals and visitors could continue to access and ride designated BLM and county roads and off-road routes, including well-loved trails like the Rimrocker Trail and John Brown Canyon.

### ***Would access for hunting or fishing be impacted by a national monument designation?***

A national monument in the Dolores Canyons would safeguard fish and wildlife habitat while maintaining public access for hunting, fishing, and wildlife management. Under a national monument designation, authority over fish and wildlife populations will be retained by Colorado Parks & Wildlife.

### ***What happens to Colorado’s ability to regulate fish and game within the Dolores Canyons?***

Nothing. National monument designation will not enlarge or diminish the state’s jurisdiction and authority with respect to fish and wildlife management, including hunting on federal lands.

***How would a national monument affect flows in the Dolores and San Miguel Rivers?***

A national monument designation would not affect the allocation of existing water or water rights and would honor all valid existing rights-of-way.

While a national monument designation would have no impact on the amount of water in the Dolores or San Miguel Rivers, protecting the public lands adjacent to the Dolores River will help improve water quality by reducing surface-disturbing activities and conserving biodiversity. As one of the significant tributaries to the Colorado River, the health of the Dolores River watershed provides critical downstream benefits to some 40 million Americans. Protecting the region as a national monument would safeguard the public lands that surround the Dolores River while elected leaders, water managers, and local stakeholders continue working to inform the management of flows from McPhee Reservoir.

***Would a Dolores Canyons National Monument impact uranium mining in the West End?***

The proposed Dolores Canyons National Monument is intended to strike a balance between conservation and historic uses of public lands in Montrose County's West End, like mining. The vast majority of mining activity and interest within the Dolores River canyon country is outside the boundaries of the proposed national monument. Over 95% of mining claims in the region are located outside the proposed boundaries of the national monument and would not be impacted by a new designation. There is not a producing mine within the proposed boundaries.

A national monument would only prohibit *new* mining claims within its boundaries; valid mining claims that occur within the proposed monument boundaries would be grandfathered in.

***Would a Dolores Canyons National Monument impact the reclamation of past mining activity?***

No. National monument designations do not impact the remediation, monitoring, or reclamation of historic mining operations.

***What happens to private and state property that's inside or adjacent to a national monument?***

Nothing. A national monument designation would only apply to federally-managed public lands. The designation does not affect access or use of private property or state lands.

***Would a national monument change how land managers mitigate and manage wildfires in Mesa and Montrose counties?***

No. As on all other federally-managed public lands, human life and property are the top priority of land managers, who would continue to take the necessary precautions and actions to protect the public from harm including wildfire.

***Would landscape and river restoration work be allowed to continue in a national monument?***

Yes. The great work done to restore the Dolores River corridor and tributaries, including tamarisk removal and native plant restoration would continue. Additionally, mine site reclamation and restoration and other landscape restoration activities would be able to continue in a national monument consistent with the management plan.

***How does the national monument proposal differ from the proposed Dolores River National Conservation Area?***

The proposed national monument in Mesa and Montrose counties is separate from and north of the National Conservation Area legislation which includes lands in Montezuma, Dolores and San Miguel Counties.