

**FACT SHEET:  
President Biden Designates Camp Hale – Continental Divide National Monument**

*Departments of Agriculture and the Interior Also Take Steps to Conserve Thompson Divide; Administration Announces Inflation Reduction Act Funding to Address Drought in the Colorado River Basin*

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to protect, conserve, and restore our country's iconic outdoor spaces and historical sites for the benefit of future generations, today President Biden signed a proclamation establishing the Camp Hale – Continental Divide National Monument. This action will honor our nation's veterans, Indigenous people, and their legacy by protecting this Colorado landscape, while supporting jobs and America's outdoor recreation economy.

In addition, the Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and the Interior (DOI) announced a proposed withdrawal to protect the Thompson Divide in western Colorado, one of the state's most cherished landscapes.

Last year, President Biden used his authority under the Antiquities Act to restore protections for three national monuments that the previous administration attempted to reduce or eliminate. The designation of Camp Hale – Continental Divide represents President Biden's first use of the Antiquities Act to create a new national monument.

The rugged landscape of Camp Hale – Continental Divide serves as a testament to a pivotal moment in America's military history, as these peaks and valleys forged the elite soldiers of the famed 10th Mountain Division -- the Army's first and only mountain infantry division -- that helped liberate Europe in World War II. The area lies within the ancestral homelands of the Ute Tribes, along the Continental Divide in north-central Colorado, and is treasured for its historical and spiritual significance, stunning geological features, abundant recreation opportunities, and rare wildlife and plants. The area's mountains and valleys also shaped our modern outdoor recreation economy, which today supports millions of American jobs.

By protecting this iconic area and proposing a mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide, the President is building on a series of steps the Administration has taken to protect some of America's most cherished lands and waters. The Administration has moved to restore protections for roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest, and initiated the process to protect Bristol Bay in Alaska and the world-class salmon fishery it supports. The Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades, the Columbia River Basin, the Boundary Waters, Chaco Canyon and dozens of other special places are also back on America's conservation agenda. Today's announcement also includes Inflation Reduction Act funding to mitigate the impacts of drought in the Colorado River Basin.

**Camp Hale — Continental Divide National Monument**

This monument preserves and protects the mountains and valleys where the US Army's 10th Mountain Division prepared for their brave service that ultimately brought WWII to a close. The 10th Mountain Division played a pivotal role in the European theatre of the war by weakening Axis forces from their position in the Italian Alps, thanks to their specialized training acquired at

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and around Camp Hale. Scaling a 1,500-foot cliff during a night attack, they were able to push back elite units of the Axis forces. Their skills, grit and endurance were instrumental in protecting democracy and fighting the spread of fascism. The 10th Mountain Division was the first and only division of the US military trained to fight in rugged, mountain terrain. At Camp Hale, and in the surrounding mountains including those of the Tenmile Range, soldiers learned winter survival techniques and to snowshoe, to climb, and most famously, to ski. After the war, many of these soldiers would return to the area, lending their training and expertise to a burgeoning ski industry. More than 60 ski areas in the United States, including many of Colorado's world-famous ski areas, owe their origin and development to these veterans. Today, the outdoor industry, inspired and built by these heroes, generates \$374 billion in economic activity and supports tens of thousands of jobs across the country.

The area has also been a home and place of significance since time immemorial for Indigenous peoples like the Ute Tribes, providing food, shelter, and medicine. The Ute Tribes were forced by the U.S. government to relinquish this area and much of their ancestral homeland in the mid-1800s. The area remains culturally important to the Ute people, who return to this area of their homelands to pray, hold ceremonies, honor their ancestors, hunt, fish, and harvest plants. The ecological diversity and abundant wildlife remain an important part of the value of this area, which features ecosystems, habitats, and important migration corridors for threatened and endangered species. This area also includes Ute burial sites that are thousands of years old, including associated funerary objects, and other areas of cultural and spiritual significance.

Camp Hale and the Tenmile range currently serves as the backdrop for some of Colorado's iconic ski resorts and contains well-trafficked hiking and biking trails, including a trail to one of the state's most frequently summited 14,000-foot peaks, Quandary Peak. The monument is on existing public lands within the White River National Forest, where the ecological diversity, abundant wildlife, stunning landscapes, and a plethora of recreation opportunities make the area the nation's most visited national forests.

The Forest Service will manage the 53,804-acre national monument and develop a management plan to protect cultural resources and the objects of historic and scientific interest identified in the proclamation. The monument will be protected for future generations while continuing to support a wide range of recreation opportunities, recognizing the ongoing use of the area for outdoor recreation, including skiing, hiking, camping, and snowmobiling. The management plan will also help guide the development of education and interpretative resources, to share the area's full story, from the history of Indigenous peoples, to the heroic training and service of the 10th Mountain Division, while maintaining space for the area's growing recreation economy.

The establishment of this monument is subject to valid existing rights, including valid existing water and mineral rights. The monument will not affect any permits held by the area's world-class ski resorts and will not restrict activities outside of the monument's boundaries. The proclamation allows for continued remediation of contaminated lands and for continued avalanche and snow safety management, wildfire response and prevention, and ecological restoration. Laws, regulations, and policies followed by the Forest Service in issuing and administering grazing permits on all lands under its jurisdiction will continue to apply.

### **Thompson Divide**

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Today, DOI and USDA are also announcing steps to conserve the Thompson Divide area in western Colorado, one of the state's most cherished landscapes. In response to broad concerns about protecting Thompson Divide's important wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, grazing lands and clean air and water, the administration is proposing a 20-year withdrawal of the Thompson Divide area from disposition under the public land laws, mining laws, and mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service have jointly submitted the withdrawal petition and application to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. Secretary Haaland's acceptance of the petition and publication of a notice in the Federal Register will initiate a two-year segregation that will prohibit new mining claims and the issuance of new Federal mineral leases on approximately 225,000 acres in the Thompson Divide area. During this time, the BLM and Forest Service will seek public comment, and conduct a science-based environmental analysis of the impacts of a 20-year withdrawal.

The Thompson Divide area has not been available to oil and gas leasing for several years, and there is no current or planned oil exploration or production in the area. Pre-existing natural gas leases in the area would be unaffected by this proposed mineral withdrawal. These pre-existing and unaffected natural gas-related leases in the Thompson Divide area constitute less than 1% of the more than 3,000 active Federal leases in the State of Colorado.

### **Addressing Historic Drought In The Colorado River Basin**

The Inflation Reduction Act makes critical investments in water infrastructure to improve system efficiency and conserve water in regions experiencing historic drought driven by climate change. Today, the Biden-Harris Administration is opening up a portion of the \$4 billion in IRA funding to mitigate drought through the Interior Department's newly created Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program. This will provide immediate resources to communities, Tribes, and irrigators in Arizona, California and Nevada. The Inflation Reduction Act will also fund major investments in conservation and long term system efficiency, including at least \$500 million in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

### **Background on Antiquities Act Designations**

President Theodore Roosevelt first used the Antiquities Act in 1906 to designate Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. Since then, 18 presidents of both parties, including recent Presidents Trump, Obama, G.W. Bush and Clinton have used this authority to protect unique natural and historic features in America, including the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, and Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients.