

# Biden designates his first national monument in the heart of Colorado's Rocky Mountains

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Rocky Mountain National Park, United States. Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

President Joe Biden is creating his first national monument on Wednesday, protecting for future generations a rugged landscape in the

heart of the Rocky Mountains where the legendary 10th Mountain Division trained for alpine warfare during World War II.

Biden is traveling to Colorado for the designation of the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument.

Biden will also announce he's blocking new mining claims and mineral leases on approximately 225,000 acres in the Thompson Divide area of western Colorado for at least the next two years and possibly for two decades.

The latest:

- Biden is using his authority under the Antiquities Act to proclaim national monuments on federal lands that contain historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, or other objects of historic or scientific interest.
- While this is the first national [monument](#) Biden has created, he previously used the act to restore environmental protections for three national monuments that had been limited by the Trump administration.
- Colorado's three GOP House members told Biden in a September letter not to use the Antiquities Act as a "workaround to the Congress." A large conservation bill to protect the area, which some Republicans consider a federal land grab, has stalled in Congress.
- The Biden administration says the new monument honors veterans and [indigenous people](#) while protecting a landscape that supports America's outdoor recreation economy.
- The Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument becomes the country's 130th national monument and the first since then-President Donald Trump declared Camp Nelson National Monument in Kentucky in 2018.

## Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument

The 53,804-acre area lies within the ancestral homelands of the Ute Tribes, along the Continental Divide in north-central Colorado. Soldiers in the 10th Mountain Division learned winter survival techniques there. They also learned how to snowshoe, climb and ski.

Many returned to the area after the war, helping build a ski industry that's supplemented by hiking and biking trails.

On existing [public lands](#) within the White River National Forest, the monument will be managed by the Forest Service. The monument will not affect any permits held by the area's ski resorts, according to the administration.

### Thomson Divide protection

The administration is proposing blocking for 20 years the development of mineral and [energy resources](#) from a natural gas-rich chunk in western Colorado. New mining claims and federal mineral leases would be paused for at least two years while the government seeks public comment and conducts an environmental analysis.

What they are saying:

- "This designation would safeguard some of the state's most iconic, historic, and ecologically significant public lands while bolstering the region's ample outdoor recreation opportunities and [local economies](#)," said Loren Blackford, acting executive director of the Sierra Club.
- "With every passing year, there are fewer World War II veterans who trained at Camp Hale left to tell their story, which is why it

is so important that we protect this site now," said Sen. Michael Bennet, one of the Colorado Democrats who pushed for the designation.

- "While Camp Hale and our servicemembers that were stationed there made important contributions to World War II, we don't support the efforts of extremist environmentalists who are seeking to hijack this historic place to create a new land designation—a designation that literally does not exist—to prohibit timber harvesting and mining on nearly 30,000 acres of land," Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Col., and eight other House Republicans wrote.
- "For over a decade, the Town of Carbondale Trustees and citizens of Carbondale have consistently supported conservation of public lands in the Thompson Divide, a landscape that is critical to our local economy, home to valuable wildlife habitat and incredible recreational opportunities, and supports some of the oldest ranching operations in the region," said Carbondale Mayor Ben Bohmfalk.

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