

Biden protects two giant US wilderness areas

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US President Joe Biden established the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in Nevada and created the Castner Range National Monument in Texas.

President Joe Biden on Tuesday designated two giant wilderness areas in Nevada and Texas as national monuments and said a new marine sanctuary could be created in the Pacific.

Biden said in a speech at the Department of the Interior that preserving the lands meant "protecting the heart and soul of our national pride, protecting pieces of history."

"Our national wonders are literally the envy of the world. They've always been and always will be central to our heritage as a people and essential to our identity as a nation," he said.

Biden established the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, a desert site sacred to Native American tribes, in Nevada, calling it "a place of reverence, it's a place of spirituality, a place of healing, and now we recognize the significance of it."

He also created the Castner Range National Monument in Texas, a high desert mountain range once used as a US army training ground.

In total, Biden set aside more than half a million acres of public land from development.

The announcement came a week after he approved the giant Willow oil drilling project in a remote area of Alaska. This angered supporters on the left, while winning approval from both Republicans and Democrats in the far northern state.

But Biden touted his record in office of having now placed under protection more lands and water in his first year than any president since John F. Kennedy in the 1960s.

He also announced he was directing the secretary of commerce to consider initiating a new National Marine Sanctuary designation around the Pacific Remote Islands—a group of tiny US islands in the middle of the ocean between Samoa and Hawaii.

This "would make it the largest ocean area on the planet with the highest level of protection," Biden said.

During his first two years in [office](#), Biden has put the Arctic Ocean waters off limits to new oil and gas fields and restored many of the protections that his Republican predecessor Donald Trump had sought to remove or reduce.

Among these were restoration of the full size and status of the spectacular Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante desert areas of Utah.

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