

# US Senate votes to expand national parks, protected lands

13 February 2019



A grizzly bear and her cub are seen at Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, which gained new protections under legislation passed by the US Senate

The US Senate approved a landmark expansion of protected lands Tuesday, the first major gain for conservationists in two years after repeated setbacks by the Trump administration.

The Senate voted 98-2 in support of the Natural Resources Management Act, which gives new or strengthened protection from mining and encroachment to more than two million acres (810,000 hectares), expands eight [national parks](#) and historic sights, and adds new national monuments and heritage areas.

Habitats for wildlife from salmon to bighorn sheep gained new protections and an important conservation fund was made permanent, after the Trump administration left it unfunded last year.

"Public lands are among this nation's greatest treasures, and we are pleased to see that there is strong bipartisan support to protect these important outdoor spaces so they can be enjoyed and

explored for generations," said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club.

Theresa Pierno, president of the National Parks Conservation Association, said that "the Senate's action today, including protecting two million acres of national park and other [public lands](#), is further proof that these issues can, and should, be bipartisan."

The bill notably removes mining rights from areas close to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.



The legislation also expands Death Valley National Park in California

In California, it expands Joshua Tree and Death Valley National Parks, boosting efforts to build pathways for wildlife between protected landscapes.

Greater protections were authorized for several Native American sites.

In addition, it opens more federal lands to hunting and fishing.

The package of bills now needs approval by the House of Representatives.

It was the first significant success for environmentalists since President Trump came into office in January 2017 and began dismantling many protections for public lands set by previous administrations.

Trump has moved to open the protected Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, shrank two national monuments in Utah to appease mining groups, reduced watershed [protection](#) laws and tried to force a huge increase in national [park](#) fees, which would have hurt poorer families.

One year ago, nearly every member of the National Park System Advisory Board resigned in protest against then-interior secretary Ryan Zinke, accusing him of gross neglect of the needs of national parks.

© 2019 AFP

APA citation: US Senate votes to expand national parks, protected lands (2019, February 13) retrieved 17 October 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-senate-votes-nationals.html>

*This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.*