

Let's take a break from the bitter partisan warfare and celebrate a bipartisan triumph: preserving numerous national monuments by presidents of both parties. This effort includes creation of 1.6 million square miles of marine preserves by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

It's impressive just how many of our Presidents have been involved in this effort. According to the [Congressional Research Service](#):

“Sixteen of the 19 Presidents since 1906 created 151 monuments, including the Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Zion, Olympic, the Statue of Liberty, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. President Franklin Roosevelt used his authority the most often (36 times), while President Obama has proclaimed the most monument acreage (about 549 million, primarily in two expanded marine monuments).”

The largest monument on land was 10 million acres, designated by Jimmy Carter in Alaska.

This has been a truly bipartisan effort. George W. Bush created what was then the largest marine preserve in the world, with the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (89.5 million acres); the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (60.9 million acres); the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (55.6 million acres); and the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument (8.6 million acres). The bipartisan effort has deep roots. Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover between them added 26 national monuments under the [National Park Service](#), including Bryce Canyon, Carlsbad Cave, and White Sands.

All of this has taken place under the aegis of the Antiquities Act, one of our shortest environmental statutes, which was passed and signed by Teddy Roosevelt in 1906. The key portion of the law provides:

“[T]he President of the United States is hereby authorized, in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments. . . .”

TR immediately [used](#) the law to protect a host of monuments, including the Petrified Forest, Muir Woods, and the Grand Canyon.

In what may count as the Supreme Court's first-ever environmental decision, [Cameron v. United States](#), the Court upheld the designation of the Grand Canyon as a historic monument:

“The defendants insist that the monument reserve should be disregarded on the ground that there was no authority for its creation. To this we cannot assent. The act under which the President proceeded empowered him to establish reserves embracing ‘objects of historic or scientific interest.’ The Grand Canyon, as stated in his proclamation, ‘is an object of unusual scientific interest.’ It is the greatest eroded canyon in the United States, if not in the world, is over a mile in depth, has attracted wide attention among explorers and scientists, affords an unexampled field for geologic study, is regarded as one of the great natural wonders, and annually draws to its borders thousands of visitors.”

The opinion was written by Justice Van Devanter, a conservative, later derided as one of the obstructionist “Four Horsemen” during the New Deal. He wrote for a unanimous Court.

Today, we are approaching the end of a bitterly fought presidential campaign. It is good to recall the times our country has risen about partisanship and ideology to save our national heritage.