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SJR-16 The Chuckwalla, Joshua Tree, and Kw'tsán National Monuments. (2023-2024)

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Senate Joint Resolution No. 16

CHAPTER 208

Relative to the Chuckwalla National Monument, the Joshua Tree National Monument, and the Kw'tsán National Monument.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 10, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 16, Padilla. The Chuckwalla, Joshua Tree, and Kw'tsán National Monuments.

This measure would urge the President of the United States to use the federal Antiquities Act of 1906 to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument, to establish a National Park Service-managed Joshua Tree National Monument adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park, and to establish the Kw'tsán National Monument.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Approximately 60 percent of land in the continental United States is in a natural state, but we are losing a football field worth of it every 30 seconds, and the decline of nature threatens wildlife, as approximately 1,000,000 animal and plant species are at risk of extinction in the coming decades across the globe, including one-third of United States wildlife; and

WHEREAS, The United States Geological Survey reports that only 12 percent of the nation's lands and inland waters are permanently protected, and other studies show that roughly 23 percent of the nation's coastal waters are currently strongly protected, with the vast majority of ocean protections found in the Pacific Ocean along the western coast of the United States; and

WHEREAS, On January 27, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order No. 14008, which launched a governmentwide effort to confront climate change, restore balance on the nation's public lands and waters, create jobs, and provide a path to align the management of the nation's public lands and waters with national climate, conservation, and clean energy goals; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 14008 directs the United States Department of the Interior to outline steps to achieve the President's commitment to conserve at least 30 percent each of the nation's lands and waters by the year 2030, known as the 30x30 goal, in order to safeguard the nation's health, food supplies, biodiversity, and the prosperity of every community and to undertake the process with broad engagement, including agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, outdoor enthusiasts, sovereign tribal nations, states, territories, local officials, and others, to identify strategies that reflect the priorities of all communities; and

WHEREAS, In October 2020, Governor Newsom outlined a comprehensive and results-oriented agenda to expand nature-based solutions across California through Executive Order No. N-82-20, elevating the role of natural and working lands in the fight

against climate change, advancing biodiversity conservation as an administration priority, and committing the state to the goal of conserving 30 percent of state lands and coastal waters by 2030; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. N-82-20 directs the Natural Resources Agency to coordinate the execution of the 30x30 goal with other state agencies and stakeholders through a series of actions, including the development of a strategy document by February 2022 titled "Pathways to 30x30," that sets California on the path to successfully implement our 30x30 conservation goal; and

WHEREAS, California tribal nations have protected and conserved their indigenous and aboriginal lands since time immemorial, utilizing Traditional Ecological Knowledge, also known as Indigenous Knowledge or Native Science, evolved over hundreds of thousands of years through direct contact with the environment, and are continuing the tradition of stewardship by leading efforts to establish or expand national monument land protections in California; and

WHEREAS, The Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano nations are leading the effort to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument to protect approximately 627,000 acres of federal public lands that reach from the Coachella Valley region in the west to the Colorado River in the east; and

WHEREAS, Designating the Chuckwalla National Monument would help ensure equitable access to nature, honor a cultural landscape, and protect the desert's unique biodiversity, wildlife habitat, landscape connectivity, and history; and

WHEREAS, The Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano nations are calling to protect approximately 17,000 acres of public lands that are adjacent to the east side of Joshua Tree National Park, as these lands are a living landscape with interconnected cultural, natural, and spiritual significance, which sustains the well-being and survival of Indigenous peoples today; and

WHEREAS, The Joshua Tree expansion area would connect to the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument and other protected places, which would help ensure land connectivity for indigenous species, and would also preserve places of cultural and historical importance, including the homelands of the Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano nations; and

WHEREAS, The Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe is leading the effort to establish the Kw'tsán National Monument, which would protect more than 390,000 acres of the tribe's aboriginal homelands located in the County of Imperial, California; and

WHEREAS, The proposed Kw'tsán National Monument lands contain incredible cultural, ecological, recreational, scenic, and historic values, including trails, desert life, petroglyphs, geoglyphs, and lithics, and the establishment of a national monument would provide protections for wildlife, cultural places, sacred sites, and scenic features; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the State of California urges the President to use the federal Antiquities Act of 1906 (54 U.S.C. Sec. 320101 et seq.) to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument, to establish a National Park Service-managed Joshua Tree National Monument adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park, and to establish the Kw'tsán National Monument; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the United States Secretary of the Interior, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Minority Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.