

CASTNER RANGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

After a 52-year-long effort from the El Paso community, President Joe Biden designated Castner Range National Monument on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at the White House Conservation in Action Summit in Washington, D.C., protecting 6,672 acres of El Paso's Franklin Mountains. Biden announced the designation along with other national monuments, including Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in Nevada and a marine sanctuary near the Pacific Remote Islands, located southwest of Hawaii.

U.S. Representative Veronica Escobar (TX-16) championed the decades-long effort and remarked: "I'm absolutely thrilled about the designation. This historic announcement has been decades in the making. Generations of activists have dedicated countless hours and resources toward achieving this once seemingly impossible goal. It brings me such joy to know that El Pasoans will soon be able to enjoy the beauty of this majestic, expansive landmark for years to come."

On Friday, March 31, 2023, the community celebrated the designation at the Andress High School Performing Arts Center in Northeast El Paso, close to Castner Range. The celebration included performances from area performers, such as Tigua dancers and mariachi groups from Chapin High School and Andress High School. U.S. Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, Under Secretary of the U.S. Army Gabe Camarillo, Fort Bliss Major General James P. Isenhower III, and Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army for Installations, Energy and Environment Rachel Jacobson attended the event and spoke of the importance of the designation and of Castner Range to the El Paso community.

Photography from the Designation event



Photo of El Paso Times cover



Camarillo and Escobar unveiled official road signs for Castner Range National Monument during the event. Jacobson proclaimed that the Judy Ackerman Trail would be the first trail inside Castner Range National Monument.

Judy, a spirited activist in the El Paso community, was well-known for her work to protect El Paso's natural spaces, including the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park and Castner Range. She passed away in November 2022. Jacobson presented the proclamation to Judy's husband during the celebration.



Sign unveiling

El Paso of Museum of Archeology Mural

On June 8, 2023, a mural celebrating the National Monument designation and what that means for El Paso and the Paso del Norte region was unveiled. The mural by Jesus "CIMI" Alvarez adorns the front wall of the El Paso Museum of Archeology, which is located on Castner Range. Alvarez said the mural tells the story of Castner and the people of El Paso, with its rich colors of blooming Mexican gold poppies and the high desert landscape; depictions of some of the earliest people of the region; and a nod to the military history of the land. The unveiling also celebrated the anniversary of the Antiquities Act, which was used by President Biden in the designation of Castner Range as a National Monument.



What's Next?

The Department of Defense owns the land that Castner Range sits on, so Castner Range will be under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army, making it the first national monument that the Army will manage in more than 90 years. The Army is now tasked with cleaning up the land to be safely opened to the public for hiking and other recreational uses. The Army has plans to hold several public meetings to get the public's input on developing and conserving the land for the benefit of all.