

Cantwell Joins President Obama for Signing of San Juan Islands National Monument Declaration

Local News

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) joined President Obama in the Oval Office for the signing of a Presidential National Monument declaration for nearly 1,000 acres of federally owned land on the San Juan Islands. The new designation preserves over 60 unique parcels of land and ensures public access for future generations and represents the first National Monument in Northwest Washington. In late January, Cantwell authored a letter along with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and U.S. Representatives Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) and Suzan DelBene (D-WA-01) [urging](#) the president to make this designation prior to the departure of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. Cantwell has been a leading proponent of preserving federal land on the San Juans, introducing legislation and holding Senate hearings to push for protection of these special spots. She has advocated for preservation through either legislation she has introduced that would designate the land a National Conservation Area, or a Presidential National Monument declaration using authority granted to the president under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Today's declaration means a long-term comprehensive management plan will now be in place for the land, which the Bureau of Land Management oversees. **"I applaud President Obama and Secretary Salazar for answering the local community's call to preserve this land for future generations to enjoy,"** Cantwell said. **"Today's designation marks the culmination of years of citizen-driven efforts to protect these cherished public lands. This Presidential National Monument declaration ensures these federal lands will remain protected, accessible, and better managed to accommodate continued visitor use and enjoyment."**

I was proud to work with Senator Murray, Representatives Larsen and DelBene, and the many stakeholders involved in helping to make today a reality." The citizen-driven effort to preserve this land has generated widespread, passionate support from the community. In February 2012, Cantwell, Salazar and members of the community [held](#) a public meeting in Anacortes to discuss federal efforts to preserve the land. In July 2011, Cantwell and Larsen [held](#) a community listening session in Friday Harbor to hear feedback on the effort to create a National Conservation Area. The effort to preserve the land is supported by Salazar, who [visited](#) the region in April 2011 to view the parcels proposed for protection and discuss the proposal with local stakeholders. During the 112th Congress, Cantwell [led](#) legislation in the Senate with support from Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) that would designate the land a National Conservation Area. Larsen led companion legislation in the House. Earlier this month, Cantwell [reintroduced](#) her legislation again with support from Murray. Larsen and DelBene introduced companion legislation in the House. Permanent protection of the approximately 1,000 acres of federally owned land ensures the land remains in its current state and publicly accessible, despite higher use. The federally owned lands include over 60 locations that range from pine forests to lighthouses and are visited by more than 70,000 people every year.