



# Foundation Document Overview

## Devils Postpile National Monument

California



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Devils Postpile National Monument Foundation Document*, contact: [depo\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:depo_superintendent@nps.gov) or (760) 934-2289 or write to: Superintendent, Devils Postpile National Monument, PO Box 3999, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

## Purpose



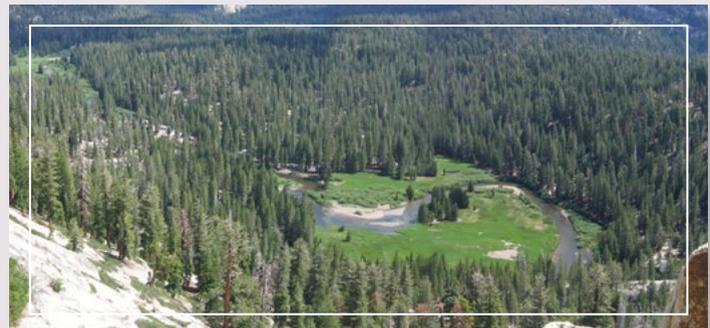
*DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves and protects the glacially exposed columns of the Devils Postpile, the scenic Rainbow Falls, and the wilderness landscape of the upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River in the Sierra Nevada for scientific value, public interest, and inspiration.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Devils Postpile National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Devils Postpile is one of the world's finest examples of columnar jointing, displaying volcanic rock columns polished by glaciers and revealing a mosaic of polygons on its dome-shaped top.
- Devils Postpile National Monument is nested in one of the largest contiguous designated wilderness areas in the lower 48 states that includes three national forests and three national parks in the Sierra Nevada.
- For a small area, Devils Postpile National Monument supports and maintains unusually rich ecological diversity reflective of its location at the intersection of three biogeographic regions. The physical setting and context create exceptional opportunities for scientific study and shared learning.
- Devils Postpile National Monument provides a traditional national park experience in a rustic setting that promotes learning and intimate, time-honored visitor experiences that include enjoying the sights and sounds of nature.
- The establishment of Devils Postpile National Monument provides compelling insight into the history and evolution of national parks and national forests, beginning in the early years of the public lands conservation and preservation movement.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Distinct Geologic Features**
- **Upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River**
- **Component of a Larger Ecosystem**
- **Body of Knowledge**
- **Opportunities for Science and Learning**
- **Natural Soundscapes, Clean Air, and Clear Views**
- **Wilderness Portal**
- **Traditional Undeveloped Park Experience**

Devils Postpile National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Cultural Resources**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The Devils Postpile challenges the intellect and inspires the imagination in our efforts to understand how lava, ice, and other forces forged and sculpted this scenic and scientific wonder.
- Complex natural processes shape and support the diverse and dynamic Devils Postpile landscape, creating inspirational scenery and opportunities for significant scientific discovery and understanding.
- Devils Postpile provides a gateway for myriad wilderness experiences, providing opportunities for personal renewal, inspiration, artistic expression, connection to the landscape, and the prospect of hope for the future.
- The establishment of Devils Postpile National Monument provides compelling insight into the ongoing evolution of our relationship to the land, environmental citizenry, stewardship ethic, and the internationally shared heritage of public lands conservation.
- The rustic setting and traditional park experience at Devils Postpile brings us closer to the land by providing opportunities for solitude, exploration, experiencing simple pleasures, and developing a sense of place.
- The monument reveals unusually rich ecological diversity for an 800-acre area. Self-directed or interpretive talks provide opportunities for intimate understanding and appreciation of the monument's connection to the larger Sierra Nevada ecosystem and the world.
- Each visitor is part of a proud and enduring legacy of stewardship that catalyzed the creation of Devils Postpile National Monument and inspires us to protect and preserve the environment as a whole for future generations.
- Evidence of powerful physical change due to past ice ages within the monument, as well as ongoing scientific climate studies, make Devils Postpile National Monument an ideal location to teach visitors about the causes and effects of natural and anthropogenic climate change.

## Description



Devils Postpile National Monument was established on July 6, 1911, by Presidential Proclamation 1166. Devils Postpile National Monument is in Reds Meadow Valley, within the central Sierra Nevada of California, surrounded by the Inyo National Forest and attached to one of the largest contiguous wilderness complexes in the lower 48 states.

Devils Postpile National Monument comprises approximately 800 acres of geologic formations, riparian and wetland areas, and mixed conifer forests, with an elevational gradient ranging from 7,200 feet at the southern monument boundary to nearly 8,400 feet at the summit of Granite Dome. Approximately 85% (687 acres) of the monument is federally designated wilderness. The monument provides access to a greater wilderness experience that includes both the 231,279-acre Ansel Adams Wilderness (of which it is a part) and the adjacent 651,992-acre John Muir Wilderness. The Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River flows through the monument and has been determined to be eligible for designation as a wild and scenic river. The closest communities to the monument are Mammoth Lakes to the east, Lee Vining and June Lake to the northeast, and Bishop to the southeast.

The peak season of visitation to the monument is mid-June through Labor Day. During September and early October, visitation can be high, with parking lots exceeding capacity, when weather is pleasant and fall colors vibrant. The primary access point (and the only vehicular access) is through Mammoth Lakes, off of U.S. Highway 395. Heavy snows limit vehicular access and force a road closure in winter. Visitor services in the valley cease after October 31, or when the road to the monument is closed due to snow and ice after October 15. The road typically reopens and visitor services resume in early- to mid-June, though winters with exceptionally high snowfall have pushed opening day into late June.

Private vehicle use is regulated during most of the summer season when mandatory shuttle service brings visitors in and out of the monument. Currently, visitation averages approximately 150,000 per year. The average length of stay for day use is four to five hours and for overnight use is two and one-half days. The monument is used as an access point for backcountry hikers heading for the Pacific Crest Trail and the John Muir Trail, estimated at 6,000 hikers each summer, as well as approximately 1,500 equestrians, most of which are commercial day trips to Rainbow Falls from the Reds Meadow Pack Station. Access to the monument in the fall when the shuttle buses are not in operation is primarily via private vehicles. The number of visitors accessing the monument during the cold winter months is very small, though winter use has been increasing in recent years. Legal winter access is by backcountry skiing or snowshoeing, although snowmobiles that are allowed on the adjacent Inyo National Forest lands occasionally trespass into the monument.

